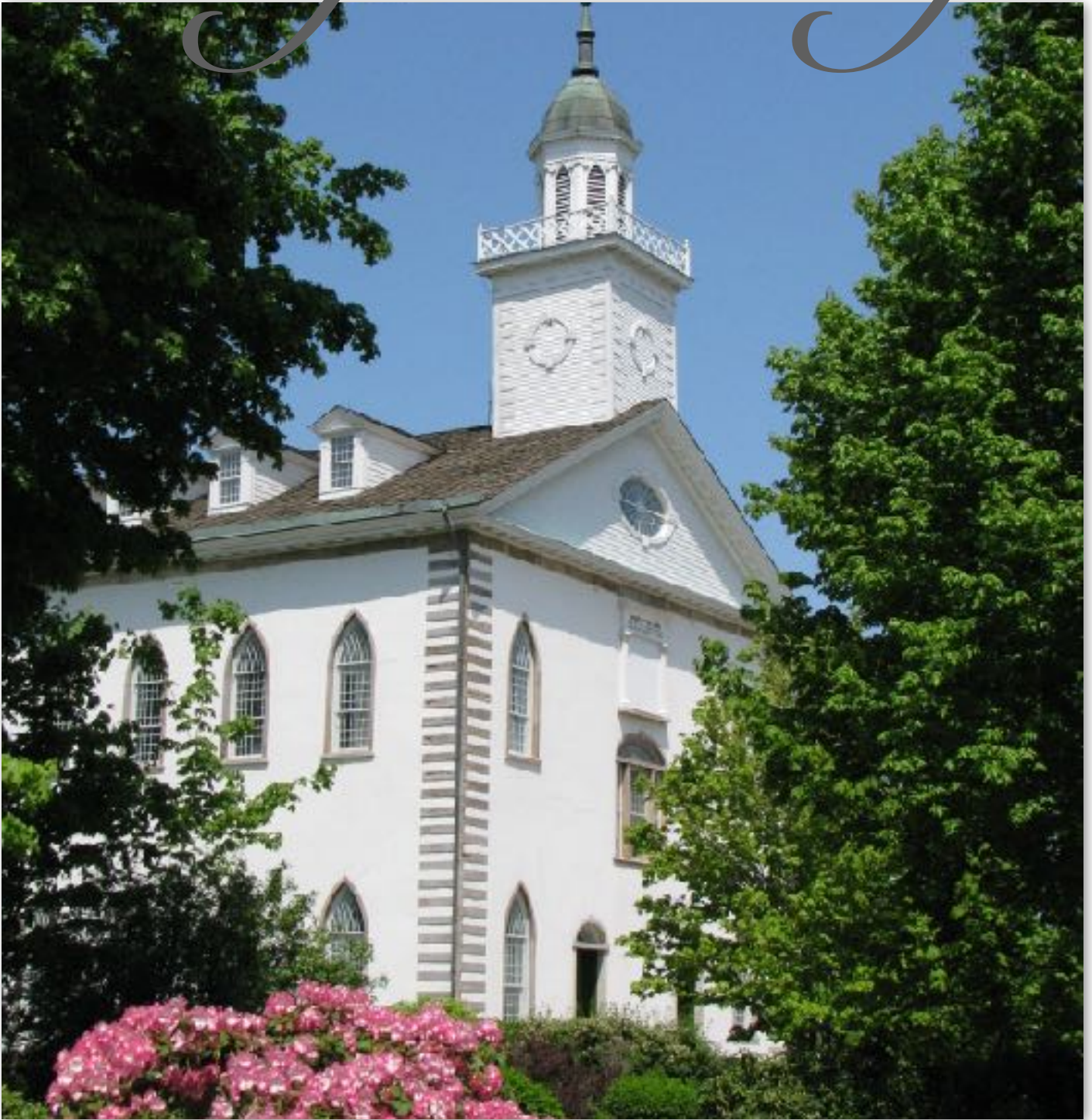


KIRTLAND TEMPLE

# *Pilgrimage*



STUDY MATERIALS FOR PILGRIMS  
SEEKING TO VISIT A SACRED PLACE





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# Kirtland Temple: Alive in Christ's Mission

## **Invite People to Christ**

Intentional missionary outreach  
in North America and Internationally

## **Pursue Peace on Earth**

"Holding all things in common"  
~ Acts 2

## **Develop Disciples to Serve**

Training and Empowering  
missionaries

## **Abolish Poverty, End Suffering**

Fast Meetings and the Bishop's  
storehouse

## **Experience Congregations in Mission**

Clothing and feeding the Temple builders;  
sending forth missionaries



# Introduction to Pilgrimage

## The Power of the Story Continues

In 1929, Roy Cheville entered Kirtland Temple for the first time. He climbed the stairs and explored each room. He considered the meaningful stories that found origin in that sacred space and carefully considered his own calling for today. He later reflected on the experience:

*In my final moments of this solo visit I stood before the Melchisedec pulpits. There I prayed. I was not begging God for favors. Instead, I was thinking of the tremendous mission before the living church. I thought that as God had in this very place directed an apostle to go to the British Isles on our first over-the-ocean mission, so he would be sending forth his witnesses today with promise of spiritual endowment.*

*John F. Garver once told me about his being alone in Kirtland Temple. So enlightening and assuring was this experience that Brother John testified to God, "With this Spirit, Father, you may send me anywhere."*

*That day, in Kirtland Temple I could say with David H. Smith who, in the woods near Nauvoo, wrote:*

*"Ever hail, blessed temple, abode of my Lord;  
I will turn to thee often, for God's guiding word."*

-Roy Cheville, former presiding evangelist,

*My Endowing Experiences in Kirtland Temple*

## An Invitation

You are invited to come to Kirtland to hear the story and experience spiritual renewal in a place where the "Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning" continues to speak to people today. The Kirtland Temple is both a historic place and sacred space. It is a site where people journey from all over the world to hear its unique history, to worship in its hallowed walls, to seek renewal, encouragement, inspiration, and pursue a deeper relationship with God.

In the following pages, you will discover lessons that celebrate Community of Christ history and opportunities to renew your own spiritual disciplines. Together we will explore how the Kirtland Temple, an aging historic site in

northeast Ohio, speaks to Community of Christ today. In the words of President Veazey at the 175th anniversary of the Kirtland Temple:



*Kirtland Temple Pilgrimage is a combination of lessons in spiritual disciplines and Community of Christ heritage.*

*Spiritual formation and renewal; increased ministerial education, sacrificial living and giving to accomplish divine purposes; promoting Christ's mission throughout the world; and the call to work for peace locally and globally are among the ways the Kirtland Temple story continues to care for the church today. If we heed these themes, we will accelerate the work of*

*effectively telling the gospel story.*

*- President Steve Veazey, March 27, 2011*

The Kirtland story underscores all five mission initiatives: Invite people to Christ; Abolish poverty, End Suffering; Pursue Peace on Earth; Develop Disciples to Serve and Experience Congregations in Mission.

In the fabric of each of the following twelve lesson plans, one or more of the Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles will be woven into the study. The lessons will demonstrate how the initiatives and principles have been present in our restoration DNA from the very beginning.

The invitation to come to Kirtland is extended to congregations, mission centers, priesthood, and youth groups. Like Roy Cheville, you have an opportunity to prepare for an endowing experience at Kirtland Temple. Experience a sacred space where generations have visited seeking renewal in their spiritual lives and longing for a greater understanding of their personal calling.

Today, we invite you to experience the same sense of wonder and empowerment shared by those who have gone before.

# Spiritual Preparation for the Journey



## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve

## Enduring Principles

Continuing Revelation

## Materials Needed

- Ignatian Inventory worksheet
- *Doctrine and Covenants*:  
Sections: 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, and 85

## Process of Preparation

Preparation for a spiritual experience is always important. Whether it is a pilgrimage, a retreat, Sunday morning worship or our daily devotions at home, our practice of God's presence is essential to our connectedness. Preparation for Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer and Martin Harris was very important for they were all involved in the beginning of a movement that would change the lives of people through revelation, translations, scribing, leadership and missionary outreach.

Repentance was a word used many times in the early sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. The act of repenting, and the directive to preach repentance was commonly found in several sections. Humility and faithfulness were also practices that were directed by God through revelation. Martin Harris in *Doctrine and Covenants* 2:2b and 4b, was the first to hear about humility and repentance through revelation in 1828.

## An Example from Church History

An example of repentance, preparation, and humility comes from our church history during the Kirtland period (1830-38). As church members prepared spiritually for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, they also continued to experience tension and divisions within the faith community.

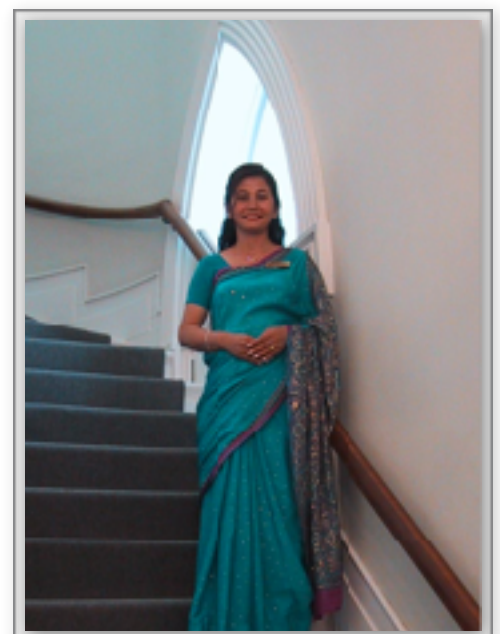
A few months before the Kirtland Temple dedication, Sidney Rigdon presided over a small worship service held in a schoolhouse located directly behind the temple. Shortly before the service began, Sidney recognized the service he had planned was not going to meet the spiritual needs of the community gathered that day. Rather than presiding over the preaching service he had originally planned, Sidney chose to lead the congregation through a prayer and testimony service where those in attendance were invited to confession. He recognized that the stress of building the temple, living in poverty, and the concern for those in Missouri had carried some church members to the breaking point. Sidney began the service by inviting members of the first presidency and twelve apostles to

come forward and confess their faults one to another. One wrote about the experience in his journal that those in the congregation "were soon overwhelmed in tears and some of our hearts were too big for utterances."

As the Kirtland church members prepared themselves, they believed they were going to see and experience Christ in their daily lives. Perhaps their gift to us is the blessing that we too have the ability to be awakened to a Christ that is within and around us every day.

## Discussion Questions:

- What would it be like to be in a community where people allowed themselves to be vulnerable and to openly confess their faults one to another?
- Sidney Rigdon's experience gives us a glimpse of Zion's community. When have you experienced a "glimpse of Zion's community" in your life?



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Preparation in the Doctrine and Covenants

As you read Section 85, verse 20, 21a, and 38, you will learn about spiritual preparation and counsel to early church members in how they should treat one another. Prayer and fasting, humility, repentance, forgiveness, scripture study and foot washing were all a part of the disciplines that helped the early Saints live out their desire to replicate Acts 2 from the New Testament.

In your review of *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 85, the scripture listed prayer, fasting, humility, repentance, forgiveness, scripture study and foot washing as methods of preparing spiritually for an experience.

- Which of these methods are you most comfortable with?
- Which of the methods are you least comfortable with? Why?

There are many practices that are helpful in preparing for a spiritual journey. For example, repentance is important to God and one definition of repentance is turning towards God, whereas sin would be defined as turning away from God. The Ignatian Inventory is a practice that helps us evaluate those things that draw us towards God (turn

towards God) and those things that draw us away from God (turn away from God). For example, prayer is something that would draw us towards God, while judging others would draw us away from God. The idea behind the inventory is to add behaviors to your list of things that draw you towards God and to diminish behaviors that draw you away from God. The inventory should be repeated once a month to see if you are making progress.

### Class Activity: Ignatian Inventory

On a sheet of paper, draw a line down the center of the page. At the top of the page, on the left side of the centerline, write the words “Things in My Life that Lead Me Towards God.” At the top of the page, right of the centerline, write the words: “Things in My Life that Lead Me Away from God.”

As individuals, take a moment to consider your own spiritual inventory. Write down the items in your life under each of the column headings.



### Discussion Questions

- What did you learn about yourself while completing the Ignatian Inventory?
- What behaviors, actions, things do you need to repent of in your life in order to help you draw closer to God/Jesus Christ?

### Closing Hymn:

“Redeemer of Israel,” Hymns of the Saints, #313

This hymn, written by W. W. Phelps in 1832, captures the spirit of the early church. The hymn appeared on the last page of the church’s first newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*, printed from a new printing press located in Independence, Missouri. Hymn historian Richard Clothier describes Phelps’ sentiments:

*Phelps’s robust hymn, “Redeemer of Israel,” likened the trials of the early Saints to the tribulation of the children of Israel, and affirmed that “the kingdom is ours, and the hour of redemptions is near.”*

–Richard Clothier,  
*150 Years of Song: Hymnody in the Reorganization, 1860-2010*



# Solitude: Pathway to the Spirit

## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve  
Invite People to Christ

## Enduring Principles

All are Called  
Responsible Choices  
Continuing Revelation

## Materials Needed

- Holy Scriptures
- Book of Mormon
- Doctrine and Covenants

## Pathway to Being Led by the Spirit

Do you desire to be led by the Spirit? Are you comfortable spending time with God alone in prayer, in reflection or meditation, in silence?

Most of the scripture references for this lesson include moments when solitude was sought in preparation for ministry. Being alone with the Spirit, praying, listening, and asking questions are essential in giving effective ministry. We can look at King David in Psalms 63:1-4, Jesus in the gospels (Mark 1:35, 6:46; Luke 6:12; Matthew 6:5-14, 14:23), the guidance we receive in II Nephi 14:12, the promise of *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 158, or the counsel of Moroni that through Spirit-led worship the community of believers will be united through humility and transparency (Moroni 6:6-9). There is an abundance of encouragement in these scriptures for each of us to be consistently engaged in personal devotions and humility, surrendering ourselves, repenting and asking forgiveness as part of the process of cleansing ourselves in preparation to be led by the Spirit.

*A Priest's first duty, if he wants to be an effective Priest, is to see to his own interior life and take time for prayer and meditation, since he will never be able to give to others what he does not possess himself.*

- Thomas Merton

## Discussion Questions

- What forms of prayer have you experienced?
- Is there a sacred space where you do your devotions where you feel especially close to God?



Image of the "Sacred Grove" in Palmyra, NY  
Photo by Val Brinkerhoff

Just as we gather for worship on Sunday mornings, we are sent forth from our place of worship to share the good news, to share our story and hear the story of others. We are sent forth to represent the Lord Jesus in all that we do. This is similar in our solitude experience. We participate in solitude to commune with God, to study and know the Lord Jesus on a deeper level. In solitude we practice

gratitude, humility, confession, repentance and ask for forgiveness. Receiving affirmation of God's love for us, a sense of our true worth and empowerment are some of the benefits we can be blessed with as we prepare ourselves for ministry, service, witness and invitation. Though Joseph Smith, Jr. did not know where his grove experience would lead him, his solitude experience began a journey with God that was blessed, challenged, enlightened, and filled with grace.

## Example from Church History

In his early years, the young man who brought forth the *Book of Mormon* led a life that was not untypical of his contemporaries in the first generations of the United States. In 1805, he was born to a middle class family in rural Vermont, the fourth of nine children to survive to adulthood. Poor investments left his parents destitute and caused the family to move west to find better fortune. They settled in the Erie Canal town of Palmyra, New York, where they worked to pull themselves out of poverty.

Joseph's family was religious, but they were not regular churchgoers. His father, Joseph Smith, Sr., was a universalist that did not believe in organized churches. When Joseph's mother became a church-going Presbyterian, it caused a religious rift in the family.

In 1820 at the age of fourteen, Joseph became concerned for his own salvation. He went to a grove of



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE



Joseph Smith III

### Church history cont.

trees located behind his home to pray. After bearing his soul in earnest prayer, he saw a vision of Jesus. He reflected on this profound experience a number of times throughout his life. In the earliest account he wrote:

*I was filled with the Spirit of God and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord. He spoke to me saying, 'Joseph, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes and keep my commandments...'*

Assured that his sins were forgiven, Joseph felt consumed with love. The Lord was with him and he felt he "Could rejoice with great joy."

Years later, both Joseph Smith III (image top left) and Jason Briggs (image on right) found themselves seeking guidance from God in places of solitude. Jason Briggs found a quiet spot next to a spring near his farm in

Beloit, Wisconsin, to seek guidance in quiet prayer. Joseph Smith III found a private place near his home in Nauvoo, Illinois, to seek answers to life's difficult questions in 1853.

### Discussion Questions

- When have you been impressed by the Spirit in your moments of solitude? Has the experience led you to serve others?
- Share an experience in your solitude that has brought you peace or a sense of awareness.

### Gratitude: A Portal to the Spirit

Inner reflections:

- Reflect on what you are most thankful for in your life and offer a prayer of gratitude.
- Reflect on a person that has made a difference in your spiritual journey and offer a prayer of gratitude for that person.

As you participate in these reflections pay attention to your inner feelings, your facial expressions and your sense of unspoken gratitude that may well-up inside.

Reflecting on gratitude helps our hearts become receptive to the Divine. A regular practice can help change our perspective, lighten a burden, bring light into darkness, and give us hope.

The true beginning of a pilgrimage is in the preparation. When we study scripture, get into a regular rhythm in devotions, yearn for God's guidance, and engage in the practice of gratitude, we are moving forward and at the same time inward in our

A good resource for gratitude may be found at: [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org)

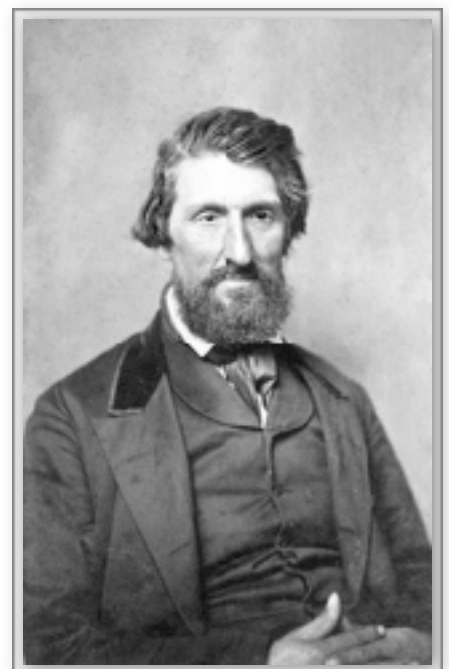
Those who register on the website will receive an insightful thought on gratefulness/gratitude each day. Here is an example of a daily thought:

*The unthankful heart...  
discovers no mercies;  
but let the thankful heart sweep  
through the day and,  
as the magnet finds the iron,  
so it will find,  
in every hour,  
some heavenly blessing!*  
- Henry Ward Beecher

pilgrimage to seek intimate moments with the Divine.

### Closing Hymn:

"Gracious Spirit Dwell with Me,"  
*Hymns of the Saints, #284*



Jason Briggs

# Preparation and Prayer: You and Your Faith Community

## Mission Initiatives

- Develop Disciples to Serve
- Experience Congregations in Mission
- Invite People to Christ

## Enduring Principles

- Continuing Revelation
- Blessings of Community

## Materials Needed

- 1836 Dedicatory Prayer
- “Dedicatory Prayer” PowerPoint

## Preparation and Prayer:

### Example from Church History

In the months leading up to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple (March 27, 1836) church leaders began meeting on the third floor of the temple to prepare themselves, and the Kirtland community, for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

Throughout the construction of the temple, early church members believed they were building the literal “House of the Lord.” It would be a sacred building, open to all, where one would commune with God through worship, education and prayer. The Saints believed that in order to experience the divine, one must prepare themselves spiritually through study, fasting and prayer.

As church leaders prepared for the dedication, they often met in small and large groups in the attic level of the temple beginning in January of 1836. A number of those in attendance later recorded their experiences in journals, letters and newspaper accounts.

Throughout their preparation, an outpouring of spiritual empowerment

was shared. People recorded seeing angels, speaking in tongues, experiencing visions and feeling an incredible sense of comfort and reassurance.

A number of these meetings were recorded by Oliver Cowdery in his sketch book. One particular meeting was held in Joseph Smith, Jr.’s office. Oliver shared that a small committee of priesthood members gathered to Joseph’s west office on the temple’s third floor to prepare the dedicatory prayer on Saturday, March 19, 1836. In preparing the prayer, the five men (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Warren Parrish, Warren Cowdery, and Oliver Cowdery) considered a number of issues. Among those elements included in the prayer was the history of the Latter Day Saints’ struggles and sacrifices, their hopes for the future, missionary zeal, the need for spiritual empowerment, the purpose of the “House of the Lord,” and their overwhelming willingness to follow God’s direction.

## Class Activity

Using the PowerPoint slides, highlight the key themes of the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer.

Themes include:

- History and sacrifice
- Purpose and calling
- Repentance
- Concerns of the people
- Missionary empowerment

## Discussion Questions

- What elements of the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer resonated within you? Why?
- How does the dedicatory prayer continue to speak to the Community of Christ today?
- What lessons can we learn from the preparation of the 1830s church members?
- How might we spiritually prepare for prayer today? Is this for our devotional prayer or a congregational dedication prayer?

## Additional Activity

In the remaining minutes of the class, prepare a prayer for the congregation. Similar to how the 1836 Kirtland leadership prepared for an endowing experience at the Kirtland Temple dedication, consider the experience you would like to have in your pilgrimage to the Kirtland Temple. What is it you would like to share with God regarding the struggles of the congregation? The sacrifice of the congregation? The needs of the people?

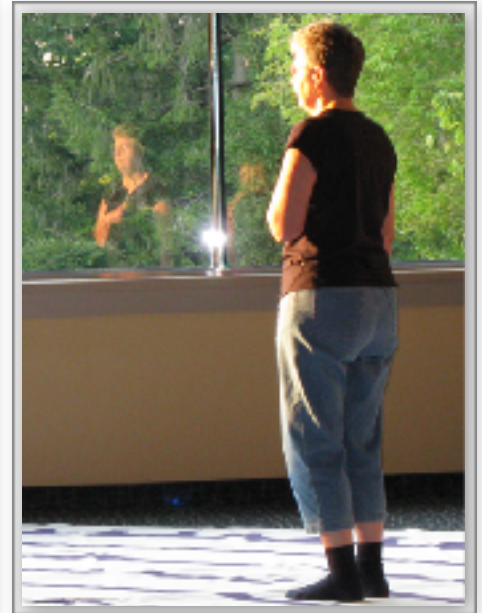
Group option: class discussion using the remaining slides of the PowerPoint for consistency with the highlighted themes from 1836.

Individual option: each student writes their own dedicatory prayer privately. If time permits, encourage the class to share their prayers.

## Closing Hymn:

“Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning,” *Hymns of the Saints*, #33

# Discernment: Practice of Listening



*The practice of discernment involves both listening to the words and sentiments of those around you as well as hearing the still voice from within.*

## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve  
Experience Congregations in Mission  
Invite People to Christ

## Enduring Principles

Responsible Choices  
Continuing Revelation  
Blessings of Community

## Materials Needed

- “Discernment” PowerPoint

## Oliver’s Lesson in Discernment

Section 9 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is addressed to Oliver Cowdery in response to Oliver’s desire to translate the *Book of Mormon*.

Oliver made an attempt to translate “But approached his task fearfully and, perhaps, doubtfully, and was unable to continue.” In response to Oliver’s experience, Section 9 guides Oliver through the process of discernment:

*Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought, save it was to ask me. But behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right, I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. (D & C 9:3a-c)*

Discernment is the practice of listening to God. The art of listening is further strengthened through the process of prayer, study, and awareness.

## Discernment in Kirtland

Throughout the Kirtland period, early church members struggled to understand the will of God in their lives, similar to our struggles today. Discernment appears to have been a way of life for early church leaders. People were invited into the waters of baptism and converts were quickly called into the priesthood and immediately sent on missions.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Discernment cont.

Church leaders relied on the gift of discernment in creating the design of the temple's inner court and in the details of the tiered pulpits located on the east and west ends of the courts. Church leadership also relied on the process of discernment as they established the growing Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthood throughout the Kirtland period.

### Discernment Today

The church has been asked to engage in the practice of discernment in *Doctrine and Covenants* 162:2c:

*As a prophetic people you are called... to discern the divine will for your own time and in the places where you serve.*

Our faith community has practiced discernment at World Conferences and prior to the 2010 conference, the church was invited to engage in discernment on the topic of "conditions of membership." The practice of discernment involves the act of centering ourselves in order to listen for God's voice. The difficulty in discerning is that there are other voices competing for our attention: task lists, neglected responsibilities, planning ahead, phone calls, and an inner voice reminding you of your strengths and weaknesses.

How will we hear God's voice amongst the clutter of our minds? One suggestion is to find time in your day to sit quietly. If you are not the sitting type, find a quiet place to walk early in the morning or in the evening.

One must also address the issue of quieting the mind. If you are having trouble quieting your mind, begin to focus on your breath: breathing in and breathing out - stay focused on your breath

and your mind will begin to slow down. An additional approach is repeating a short phrase or scripture such as "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Listen for God's voice in the quiet of the moments. If your mind starts to race again, return to your breathing exercise and/or repeating scripture until you return to a calm and quiet mind. This is a discipline that you will be more comfortable with through practice.

Practicing the "Prayer of Examen" is a discipline that helps us observe God's presence in our everyday life and sensitizes us to God's presence and voice. The recommendation would be to engage in this practice daily.

Discernment is not an event oriented practice. Discernment is a daily practice where one strives to listen to God's voice and responds to the insight given. The insight may be an affirmation of God's love for you and others, or it could be the awareness of someone's need. Discernment may result in a scripture surfacing that finds you in your time of need, or offers guidance towards a decision you, your family, or your congregation may be considering.

### Class Activity

View the PowerPoint presentation "Discernment" for additional class discussion.

### Spiritual Practice:

#### The Prayer of Examen

A prayer form developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) in his work on "spiritual exercises," the prayer of examen is often practiced at the end of the day, but is applicable at any time.

### Prayer of Examen

**First, I come before God in humble prayer. I am thankful for God's Spirit and for all God does for me and for all people. And I gently enter into this time of prayer with God.**

**Second, after asking for God's enlightenment, I review my day.**

- **Where do I recognize God's presence?**
- **Where was God's Spirit touching me or someone else?**
- **In my thoughts and actions, when was I the most Christ-like?**
- **When did I fall short?**

**Third, I trust and receive God's grace, forgiveness, and healing for any actions that may have been uncaring or harmful to other people, creation, or myself.**

**Fourth, I look forward to tomorrow, with a decision to be more conscious of all of my thoughts, words, and actions. I determine to be more aware of God's presence living within me and to act and respond as the Lord Jesus would.**

**Fifth, I gently exit this prayer time by thanking God for this experience with God in remembrance, in gratitude for the gift of this day, and in determination that I will be more conscious of God's presence tomorrow.**

-Adapted from Marvin Rice, "Open Our Eyes," *Healing the Body of Christ*

# Image of God: An Exploration of How We See God Today

## Mission Initiatives

- Invite People to Christ
- Develop Disciples to Serve

## Enduring Principles

- Continuing Revelation
- Grace and Generosity

## Materials Needed

- *Holy Scriptures*

## Introduction

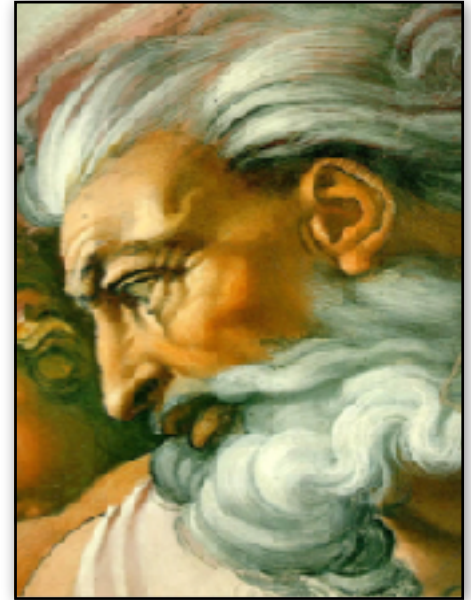
In spiritual formation and spiritual direction work we like to explore with people their image of God to see how they perceive God. Some may see God as a punishing deity that is displeased with them because of their sin. Accumulative sin, where God keeps record of everything you have done wrong, may burden an individual to the point that God is not

approachable because of the weight of guilt that is carried within them. Perhaps one's perception is that God is an absentee Creator that has turned away from or abandoned the individual for some unknown reason. Others may have a bad religious experience in their life and lose interest in having a relationship with God. The exploration of God's image is important for a healthy spirituality. Finding release from guilt, forgiveness, assurance that God is a living being who is ever present and who welcomes us into the Divine presence at all times are important discoveries or reinforcements for all people.

## Our Image of God is Shaped by Experience: Bruce's Testimony

When I was a boy growing up in the Methodist church, my image of God was that of a grandfatherly figure - an older gentleman, approachable, like a grandfather, who is always glad to see you, love you, hug or hold you. This "image of God" sat on a throne, listened to prayers, and cared for His people's needs.

When I was 9 or 10 years old, my image of God was augmented to Spirit-something I could not see, but something I could feel inside me that spoke to me by impressions of thought that were not my own. These impressions were not



for myself but called me into action to facilitate worship experiences for the boys in my ward in Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children in San Francisco. In the 1950s, Shriner's Hospital did not allow parents into the hospital to visit their child on the ward. The children visited their parents through a second story window on Sunday afternoons for 90 minutes, yelling back and forth as the parents stood in a courtyard below. Because of this physical separation and the infrequency of visitation, the boys on the ward became a community. This community saw members come and go - some staying as short as 8 weeks and as long as 4-6 months.

In my desire to respond to the Spirit, the hospital was very cooperative in helping me gather material for worship - a record player, a Tennessee Ernie Ford record of "gospel hits," while my Pastor delivered my Bible to assist me in



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Testimony continued...

reading the gospels with the other children. Together we prayed the Lord's Prayer, recited the 23rd Psalm, and read stories of Jesus from the gospels. The lessons were always followed by Tennessee Ernie Ford's record as we danced around the ward in celebration.

### Questions for Sharing

- What was your earliest image of God when you were a child?
- What was your earliest experience with God's Spirit moving within you?

### Biblical Exploration

*Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'*

*So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

- Genesis 1:26- 27

Richard Rohr, Franciscan Priest, states in his writing on *The Maternal Face of God* from his larger work *On Transformation: Collected Talks, Volume 1*:

*Most of us know that God is beyond gender. When we look at the Book of Genesis, we see that the first thing God is looking for is quite simply 'images' (Genesis 1:26-27). God is not looking for servants, for slaves or for people who are going to pass loyalty tests. God is just looking for images - 'images and likenesses' of who God is. God divided this one whole image and likeness into what we call masculine*



*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

-John 3:8

**Wind and Fire:** *And suddenly a sound came from the heaven like a rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*

-Acts 2:2-4a

The use of images to describe God in the scriptures is the process of the writer using imagery to describe sacred experiences in ways that help us understand God's nature, behavior, and personality.

### Discussion Questions

- When you have prayed, meditated, used guided imagery, or dreamed, what images have you encountered that represent God, Jesus, or Spirit?

*and feminine. Whoever God is, God is profoundly and essentially what it means to be male and female. We have to find and to trust the feminine face of God and the masculine face of God. Both are true and both are necessary for a full relationship with God. Up to now, we have strongly relied upon the masculine.*

### Discussion Questions

- How do you respond to Richard Rohr's thoughts? Do they confirm for you what you already believe? Do they unsettle you?
- How important is gender to your image of God?

### Other Images of God

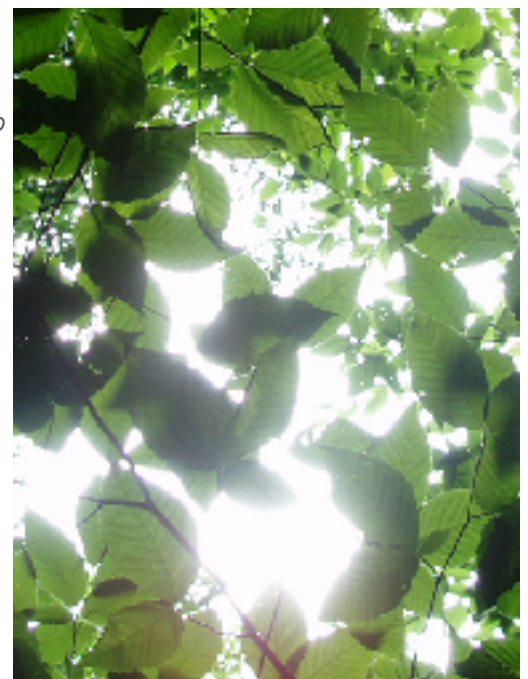
**Eagle:** *Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, the Lord alone did lead them...*

-Deuteronomy 32:11-12

**Moth, Dry Rot, Lion:** *I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like Dry rot to the house of Judah... I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will rend and go away.*

- Hosea 5:12, 14

**Light:** *In him, was life, and the life was the light of men [all people].*



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Image of Jesus

Jesus is a person/image that tells us about God. Emanuel, another name for Jesus referred to in Matthew 1:23 means, "God is with us." As disciples we are challenged to imitate Christ, to embody Christ; a tall order for each of us and something to always strive for in our daily

walk. Formation work is about the journey of becoming Christ like, to be unified with God through Christ, to fulfill Jesus' prayer in the 17th chapter of John, 22nd verse:

*The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.*

Jesus is an image of the spirituality of a human being, God's creation.

### Image of God: An Example from Church History

In Kirtland, the early saints experienced an outpouring of spiritual experiences both before and after the dedication of the temple. Early accounts share stories of visions, speaking and singing in tongues, seeing pillars of fire rise from the temple roof, and feeling a mighty rushing wind filling the temple.

One of the best-known accounts of this period comes from Joseph Smith, Jr.'s diary. In the journal, he shares that around 1,000 people gathered into the lower court of the temple for a Sunday afternoon communion service. After serving the sacrament, the heavy curtains were dropped from the ceiling turning the large assembly room into four small areas where priesthood members began blessing babies and confirming new members. While these activities were taking place, Joseph retired to the pulpits for a time of private prayer with his close friend, Oliver Cowdery. The two men lowered the curtains around them for privacy and knelt in prayer together. As the two men



Melchisedec pulpits, lower court, Kirtland Temple. Photo by Val Brinkerhoff

began to rise from from prayer, a beautiful vision opened before them.

Joseph shared the experience with his scribe, Warren Cowdery, Oliver's older brother. Warren recorded the experience in Joseph's journal:

*After rising from prayer the following vision was opened to*

*both of them. The veil [sic] was taken from their minds and the eyes of their understandings were opened. They saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit before them and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was like the pure snow. His countenance shone above the brightness of the sun, and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the Voice of Jehovah, saying, 'I am the first and the last. I am he who liveth. I am he who was slain. I am your Advocate with the Father. Behold your sins are forgiven you. You are clean before me. Therefore lift up your heads and rejoice. Let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.*

*For behold I have accepted this house and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people, in mercy, in this House. Yea, I will appear unto my servants and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments and do not pollute this Holy House. Yea, the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out and the endowment with which my servants have already been endowed and shall hereafter be endowed in this House. And the fame of this House shall spread to foreign lands, and this is the beginning of the blessing, which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Even so. Amen.*

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE



Pulpits located in the lower court of the Kirtland Temple.  
Photos by Val Brinkerhoff

### Church history continued...

The experience in the pulpits on Sunday, April 3, 1836, was the last recorded entry in Joseph Smith, Jr.'s journal during the Kirtland period.

### Discussion Questions

- As you study the words included in the journal account, what appears to be the image of God shared by Joseph and Oliver? How does Joseph and Oliver's description of God compare to your own?
- In the journal account as God speaks to Joseph and Oliver, there is first a statement of who is in their presence: *I am the first and the last, I am he who liveth. I am he who was slain. I am your Advocate with the Father.* This introduction is immediately followed by a spirit of forgiveness and permission to rejoice: *...lift up your heads and rejoice. Let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.* As the Lord approaches Joseph and Oliver, there is an introduction, repentance, rejoicing sequence. What does this say about the approachability of God? If you were in Oliver and Joseph's position, would you find it a warm and reassuring experience, or an intimidating interaction with God? What does this experience say to us today?

- The second paragraph in the journal describes the Lord's warm hospitality and vision for the temple. Is this a prophetic statement for today, or does it only speak to those of the 1830s? How does this paragraph shape your view of the Kirtland Temple today?





# Sacred Purpose and Calling: An Invitation from Christ

## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve  
End Poverty, Pursue Justice

## Enduring Principles

All Are Called  
Continuing Revelation

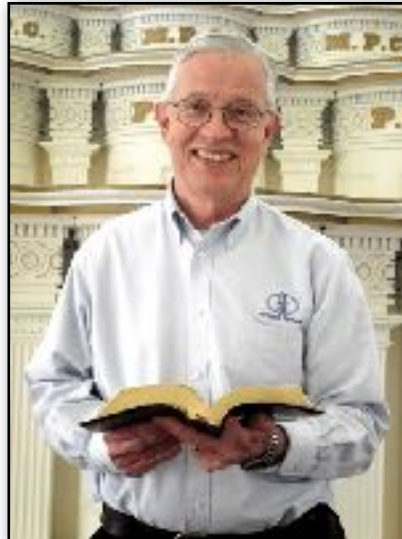
## Materials Needed

- *Holy Scriptures*
- *Doctrine and Covenants*

## Calling: The Invitation By Bruce Crockett

When I ponder the different scenarios of people becoming conscious of their call, I think of Jesus who seemed to recognize his calling early in his young life. Jesus also seemed very clear about his purpose in the world. I think of the twelve disciples who responded to the invitation immediately but had to grow into their understanding of the purpose of the call and what it would require of them. In addition, there is Saul, who later became Paul, who had some difficulty recognizing a change in his calling and purpose and God dramatically got his attention.

When we receive a calling it can lead us into a humble state that lifts up the question: “For what purpose?” Or, the other responsive question: “Who, me?” Regardless of your initial response, once you have come to grips with what has happened and you accept the call, the exploration begins; the searching of self and of who God is in your life. In this exploration is the deepening of your prayer life, that can lead to humility, gratitude, meditation and scripture study. An examination of why you want a deeper relationship with God and at what cost are you



willing to pursue this journey are questions that will need to be pondered. One of the sentences that may capture God’s perspective comes from the book *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It states:

*For God beholds with His merciful eyes, not what you are, nor what you have been, but what you would be.*

Calling is about becoming.

Whether I reflect on my conversion to Jesus, my conversion to Community of Christ, my priesthood calls, or other purposes of the impression of the Spirit, each was an invitation to change, to be transformed, to become more than I was in the moment, and to serve others. I believe the invitations (callings) are made in and through a deep sense of God’s love for God’s creation, God’s people and for the opportunities that are before us each day to impact each other in helpful ways, in loving ways, in sacred ways. As we respond to these invitations, we

can develop Christ centered relationships, form bonds, and establish communities that in our movement we refer to as “signal communities,” “Zion,” or the “kingdom.” I believe we actually have a series of callings in our lifetime - some that we respond to and some that sadly we ignore for various reasons. We are constantly being invited into God’s presence each day through callings and invitations whether an experience like Joseph Smith, Jr.’s in the sacred grove, a moment of grace, or a worship service at church. Why are we receiving these calls and invitations? Perhaps it’s as simple as God wanting to convey to us how much God loves us. For some of us it is the reassurance that God is real, Jesus is alive and well. Perhaps through this awareness the hope is that we would pay closer attention to the leadings of the Spirit, that we would surrender our lives - a little at a time or completely - that we would be changed, transformed into a deeper relationship with Deity that helps us co-create with the Holy a community. If God did not have confidence that we could do these things, why would God continue to invite us? Call us?

## Newel K. Whitney’s Call to Bishop

Community of Christ history is filled with examples of people who have wrestled with trying to understand their divine calling and purpose. Newel K. Whitney is one example of an individual who was conflicted with his call to bishop.

In December 1831, Newel was called to be the first bishop in Ohio.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Whitney's Call continued...

His call was later recorded as *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 72. When Newel received the call, he responded to Joseph Smith that he was unsure of the calling and did not see a bishop within himself. Joseph encouraged Newel to go to the Lord with his questions and he will receive an answer. As Newel prayed to the Lord about his calling to the office of bishop, he heard a voice that said, "Thy strength is in me." Newel's experience with God gave him the assurance that he could fulfill the ministry of a bishop. He accepted the call and became the first bishop in Kirtland.

The following year, Newel was called to "Travel round about and among all the churches, searching after the poor to administer to their wants by humbling the rich and the proud." Newel instituted fast meetings where church members fasted from meals and brought their essentials (butter, bread, produce, etc.) to their Sunday meetings. The food was taken to the "bishop's storehouse" (Whitney Store room) and distributed to the poor by Newel and his counselors.

Newel and his wife, Elizabeth Ann, were fairly wealthy. However, when Newel accepted his call to bishop and the responsibilities to minister to the poor, the Whitney family committed themselves through much sacrifice and faith. They donated much of their property to the church and at times many members were dependent on them for housing, food, and employment. By the end of 1835, Newel and Elizabeth Ann hosted an enormous "feast for the poor" that lasted three days. Elizabeth Ann looked back on the sacred purpose and calling shared with her husband and said:

*We had always been in the habit of entertaining our friends and acquaintances generously and hospitably, but after we received the Gospel we did not feel like using our means and time in a way that would only benefit those who had an abundance of this world's means. According to our Savior's pattern and agreeably to the Prophet Joseph's and our own ideas of true charity and disinterested benevolence, we determined to make a 'Feast for the Poor,' such as we knew could not return the same to us; the lame, the halt, the deaf, the blind, the aged and infirm.*

*The feast lasted three days, during which time all the vicinity of Kirtland who would come were invited, and entertained as courteously and generously as if they had been able to extend hospitality instead of receiving it...*

### Discussion Questions

- Just as Newel K. Whitney had desires for divine help when struggling with his calling, when have you wrestled with difficult situations in life and turned to God and/or the scriptures for help? What was your experience?
- When have you been aware of God's presence in your life and how did that presence impact you?
- What has been God's invitation to you in the past? What do you feel is the invitation now?

### Understanding Your Sacred Purpose

Just as the structure of the Kirtland Temple had a sacred purpose in the 1830s, so did the people who built the unique "House of the Lord." The purpose of the temple and the calling of the people were articulated by divine revelation through Joseph Smith, Jr. Many converts were drawn to Kirtland by a stirring within them that took place during conversion experiences. These powerful experiences created strong desires to live in a Christ centered community, a utopian experiment in living ideals described in the book of Acts. The people were drawn to Kirtland through a spirit of restoration, in an attempt to restore the church as it was in the New Testament.

But the people who migrated to Kirtland discovered tough times, poor housing, and little food. Despite their struggles, they genuinely believed in what they were called to do. Confidence in church leadership, shared resources with those who had provisions, faith in God that He would guide them, and the hope that more members of the church would gather to Kirtland, helped stimulate the saints to continue working, persevere through the difficult times, and to worship with expectation that they would receive an outpouring of the spirit. The results were a community of 2,000 people, including missionaries traveling hundreds of miles to share the good news of the Gospel. Faith, Christ centered living, witness, sharing resources, sacrifice, confidence in leadership and most important - God's blessings - were all elements that worked together to make Kirtland a successful community.

### Discussion Questions

- How would you define the purpose of your congregation?
- What do you feel is your sacred purpose, or calling?
- Does the idea of being co-creators with God, to give expression of God's kingdom on earth, resonate within you?

# Kirtland Temple: A Model for Spiritual Discipline

## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve  
Invite People to Christ

## Enduring Principles

Unity in Diversity  
All Are Called

## Materials Needed

- Holy Scriptures

## Kirtland Temple

The building of the Kirtland Temple was a major commitment for the impoverished church members living in and around Kirtland. There was an urgent need in 1832 for a schoolhouse for the growing community. As the Kirtland saints pondered how they would acquire the resources for such a place, they were led to think on a grander scale. By 1833, the early faith community began clearing a wheat field and digging the foundation for their first temple.

The purpose of the Kirtland Temple was unique for our faith community. The new gathering place would serve



not only as an exceptional house of worship and symbol for spiritual empowerment, but also as a public school, offices for church leaders, and a missionary training school. In many ways, the role of the temple reflected the mission and values of the early church members.

*And do thou grant, holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house, may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning, even by study, and also by faith...*

-Kirtland Temple  
Dedicatory Prayer, 1836

## House of Learning

For the most part, the early saints were not a learned people. Their poverty limited their opportunities for education. They often felt vulnerable because of their lack of education. Sidney Rigdon speaks of this vulnerability during his July 4th address in 1838 at Far West, Missouri (see box). Despite their limited resources, members of the church were passionate about learning. This enthusiasm is reflected in how the Kirtland Temple was used.

The second floor of the temple was traditionally known as the “School of the Apostles.” The upper court was filled with desks where the early saints anticipated hundreds of students filling the classroom space. The classroom would be used to train missionaries on church beliefs and scripture.

The Kirtland High School held classes on the third floor. The high

school included 135 to 140 students. Classes were held during the day on a variety of subjects: arithmetic, grammar, geography, reading and writing, Latin and Greek.

In January of 1836, early church leaders established our faith community’s first church seminary. The seminary was called the “Kirtland, Ohio, Theological Institution” and was among the first five seminaries in the state of Ohio.

## Discussion Questions

- As you consider the quotes from the dedicatory prayer and Sidney Rigdon, what vision comes to mind about your own congregation and their commitment to educating one another and the educational opportunities in your area?

## Purpose of the Temple as an Educational Tool to Conquer Injustice

*... where all the sciences, languages, &c., which are taught in our country, in schools of the highest order, shall be taught. And the object is to have it on a plan accessible to all classes, the poor, as well as the rich, that all persons in our midst, may have an opportunity to educate their children, both male and female to any extent they please. So that all the talents in our midst, may be called forth in order that we may avail ourselves of all the means God puts into our hands, and put it into the power of all, to deliver themselves, from the impositions, and frauds, which they are practicing upon the more illiterate part of the community, by those who have had superior advantage...*

-Sidney Rigdon,  
Far West, MO, 1838

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### House of Prayer for All People

The temple was a place of prayer throughout the week. Sunday worship began at 9 a.m. with prayer, testimony, preaching, scripture and singing. After a break at noon, the service would continue with preaching and communion in the afternoon. A number of accounts reveal anywhere between 500 to 1,000 people in attendance at the Sunday worship services in the temple. The choir would often return to the temple a third time on Sundays for choir practice in the evening.

On Thursdays, up to 500 people gathered at the temple for prayer and testimony services presided over by Joseph Smith, Sr.. Similar to Sunday worship, the prayer and testimony meetings lasted between 5-6 hours in length. To facilitate individual sharing, the heavy curtains (hanging from the lower court ceiling) were lowered to divide the sanctuary into four smaller rooms with a priesthood member in each corner to preside. At the end of the testimony period, Joseph Smith, Sr. would have the curtains raised to join all four smaller congregations together for a sending forth blessing.

The temple worship services were not just for church members. Early church leaders invited ministers of other faiths to use the temple as a pulpit for their unique interpretation of the gospel. Perhaps it was in hopes that people of other faiths would return the favor and welcome our own church missionaries to use their chapel/places of worship.

The “Rules and Regulations for the House of the Lord,” created in 1836, included Rule #8 that stated:

*All persons whether believer or unbelievers shall be treated with due*

### Truman Coe, a protestant minister from Kirtland, made these observations of the 1830s church members in Kirtland:

*...candor obliges me to say, that many of the common people are industrious, good neighbors, very sincerely deceived, and possibly very sincere Christians. They seem to delight in the duty of prayer, and the services of devotion, and their zeal goes far beyond anything seen among sober christians... Stimulated by strong faith and zeal, you will see them muster all their forces for miles around to hear the brethren speak in tongues, and proclaim the wonderful works of God. In this view they give to those who call themselves sober Christians a most severe rebuke. If they had half the zeal of these misguided Mormons, the world would tremble, and the millennial day would speedily be ushered in.*

*respect by the authorities of the Church.*

S. A. Davis, a Unitarian minister traveled to Kirtland and experienced the hospitality of the Kirtland community in 1837. Following his temple tour, his guide invited him to deliver a discourse from the temple pulpits that evening. Despite the rain and muddy roads, a crowd of 400-500 gathered to hear Davis speak that night. In reflecting on his Kirtland experience, S.A. Davis said:

*...I have seldom, if ever, been treated with greater kindness by any denomination of Christians, or seen manifested more liberality of sentiment and Christian charity, than by the Latter Day Saints, during my visit among them...*

### Discussion Questions

- What comes to mind as you read the observations from Truman Coe and S.A. Davis as they described the people of Kirtland?
- What if Coe and Davis arrived at your congregation for a few days. What observations would they make of your faith community and house of worship? What description would they give of your community?
- Challenge: Invite a visitor unfamiliar with your congregation to observe your Sunday activities. Ask your guest to reflect on their experience with the congregation - what did they observe, what did they appreciate and what areas do they think the community needs to improve?

### House of Order

The Kirtland period in church history is one filled with establishing basic church structure. Much of this structure includes the introduction of new priesthood offices, a first presidency, bishopric, seventies, and apostles.

The “House of the Lord” was a place where church leaders and priesthood members gathered to discuss the growing needs of the church community. Regularly scheduled priesthood meetings were held on the third floor in the evenings throughout the week.

Joseph Smith’s office was also located on the third floor. His office served as the headquarters for the growing church and the location for many early administrative meetings.

### Discussion Question

What can we take away from the Kirtland “House of Order” experience/tradition for Community of Christ congregations today?

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Missionary Empowerment

As mentioned earlier in the “House of Learning” section, the second floor of the temple was set aside as the *School of the Apostles* and was intended to be used as classroom space for missionary training. The *School of the Apostles* consumed nearly one-third of the temple’s total space. Evangelism was a powerful calling for the early church.

Both before and after the temple dedication, missionaries were sent throughout the country and into Canada. Following the dedication, the church’s missionary direction began to expand overseas. In many ways, the lower court pulpits represent the international missionary zeal of the early church. At the 175th anniversary of the Kirtland Temple dedication in 2011, President Veazey expressed the historical and evangelical importance of the pulpits as he delivered his commemoration address from the Melchisedec pulpits of the lower court:

*This is the place [temple pulpits] where Joseph Smith, Jr. turned to Heber C. Kimball in June of 1837 and called him to go on the first overseas mission for the church. Kimball was set apart a short time later in the Sidney Rigdon home across the street for that mission. He was soon on his way to England to open the work of the church in Europe.*

*It was expressed again in 1874, when Joseph F. McDowell organized an RLDS branch in Kirtland and called it “Tiona,” Tahitian for “Zion” to honor the newly established church in Tahiti.*



*President Veazey sharing the commemoration message at the 175th anniversary of the Kirtland Temple dedication, March 27, 2011.*

*In 1959, at a High Priests Conference, Roy Cheville stood in the same pulpits and commissioned Blair Jensen and Charles Neff to take the gospel to Asia. Cheville recognized the power of sacred story and place. He intentionally connected the beginning of the Orient Mission - which was transformative in the Church’s life- to the beginning of the Europe Mission 122 years earlier.*

*It was also here, several years ago, following the approval of Doctrine and Covenants Section 163 and its guidance calling for closer association*

*And we ask thee, holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house, armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them; and from this place they may bear exceeding great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hands, to fulfill that which thou has spoken by the mouths of thy prophets concerning the last days.*

*-Joseph Smith, Jr.,  
Kirtland Temple Dedicatory Prayer, 1836*

*of the Council of Twelve and Quorums of Seventy in holistic evangelism, that I had the privilege of meeting with the Presidents of Seventy to explore how to implement the intent of the counsel. I have no doubt the power of place, the space, and story, plus the opportunities afforded by the new Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center, enriched our discussions and the unfolding vision.*

*The Kirtland Temple is still caring for the church by challenging us to renew our sense of vision, calling and commitment to take the gospel story to all nations.*

*-Stephen M. Veazey,  
Kirtland Temple, March 27, 2011*

### Discussion Questions

- What resonated within you as you read President Veazey’s words about the temple as a place of missionary empowerment?
- When in your life have you felt empowered for missionary outreach?
  - What spiritual lessons can we learn from the role and purpose of the Kirtland Temple?
  - What parts of the Kirtland Temple (learning, prayer, education, etc.) are similar to your congregation’s chapel, or gathering place?
  - The role of the temple reflected the mission and values of the early church members. As you consider your own special place of worship, how would you like your chapel to reflect the mission and values of your congregation?

# Building Community: Preparation in 1830s Kirtland

## Mission Initiatives

Experience Congregations in Mission  
Abolish Poverty, End Suffering

## Enduring Principles

Unity in Diversity  
Blessings of Community

## Materials Needed

- Holy Scriptures
- “Building Community” PowerPoint

## Nineteenth Century Community Building in the U.S.

Using the “Building Community” PowerPoint presentation, walk through the slides together. The slides and discussion questions will help highlight both church history and the larger U.S. history.

**Slide Three:** It is the early 19th century and a youthful United States of America offers to its citizens freedom of religious expression. Community building appears to be on many minds. In a letter to a friend in 1840, Ralph Waldo Emerson describes the American enthusiasm for building community:

*We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket.*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Slide Four:** For those interested in joining a communal group, a wide variety of options were available. Opportunities included Ann Lee and the Shakers, The Rappites of the Harmony Society, the Separatists of Zoar, Ohio, the Perfectionists of Oneida, New York. Each of these groups practiced community living and shared all possessions in common.

**Slide Five:** The communal group closest (geographically) to Kirtland was the South Union Shaker settlement, located approximately twenty miles from Kirtland in what is known today as Shaker Heights. Officially known as the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Coming, traditionally called “Shakers,” this religious movement was founded by Ann Lee in the mid-18th century. A number of the dances included the practice of “shaking the sins of your body.” The excessive shaking in worship was the reason the group became

known as “the Shakers.” The Shakers gathered to shared communities throughout New England and as far west as Kentucky. The group modeled their gathering after the New Testament principles with a great emphasis on assisting the poor.

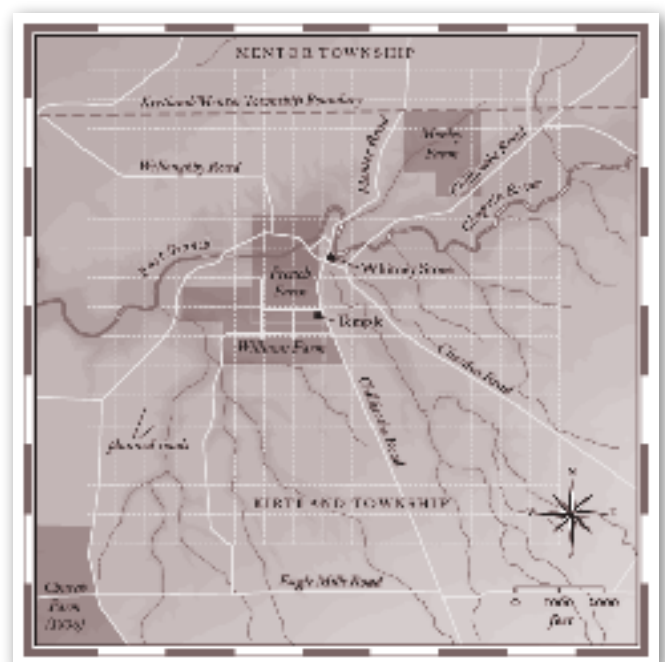
**Slide Six:** Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers, explains the emphasis on helping the poor:

*You must remember the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherless; And deal out your bread to the hungry, And your clothes to the naked. Your natures will say, ‘they may work and get these things for themselves.’ But Christ said, ‘Give to him that asketh and of him that would borrow thee, turn not thou away.’*

-Ann Lee

## Building Community in Kirtland

**Slide Seven:** While the Shakers and Harmonists were creating their “kingdom of God on earth,” our own church members were exploring ways of living out the New Testament. The Kirtland saints were especially inspired by the earliest Christians in the New Testament. They looked to Acts, chapter two as a template for a new lifestyle in Ohio. This lifestyle, as laid out in Acts, included assisting the poor, worshipping in temples, and living in shared communities.



Map by John Hamer, 2010

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Building Community Continued...

**Slide Eight:** Sidney Rigdon expressed in 1830 his perspective of communal living as one that was based in the New Testament:

*Our pretensions to follow the apostles in all their New Testament teachings, required a community of goods; that as they established their order in the model church at Jerusalem, we were bound to imitate their example.*

-Sidney Rigdon

**Slide Nine:** Sidney encouraged other like minded believers to establish their own communal settlement at the large local farm of Isaac Morley. The group called themselves “The Family” and soon began sharing communal property. However, the new community arrangement was difficult for some.

**Slide Ten:** Levi Hancock’s story is just one experience that reveals the issues that arose as early church members attempted living “all things in common.”

Despite the struggles shared at the Morley farm, the Kirtland saints persevered. Church leaders work together to design a new community with the center of town located at the top of the hill just south of the east branch of the Chagrin River (see map on page 20). The Kirtland town square laid out in detail in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 91: 1a-3c would include three large temples. The first temple would be the “House of the Lord” a temple dedicated to God and a place where the saints would worship. The second building, located directly south of the first temple, would be dedicated to the First Presidency, while the third building was designated as a large print shop for the publication of

newspapers, scriptures, hymnals, missionary resources, etc. Unfortunately, the Kirtland saints were only able to start and finish one of the three buildings.

**Slide Eleven:** This slide depicts a plat map for the 1830s Kirtland community. Notice the close proximity of the faith community, not only to one another, but close to the temple. The saints intended for the “House of the Lord” to be the center of their community life, both geographically and spiritually. This map reflects both the temporal and spiritual vision for Kirtland.

### Slide Twelve: Discussion Questions

A town square located at the center of town was not a unique concept for the Latter Day Saints. There were a number of New England communities designed with town squares, many of the Saints had lived in such communities. Generally the town square included a court house - a center place that represented justice. The unique element about Kirtland’s town square was that it replaced the traditional court house with a “House of the Lord.” The saints were declaring to the world that the Lord would be the center of their physical and spiritual lives.

- What is your reaction to this community design?
- How does this community design make you feel when you consider the relationship/division of church and state in our society today?
- Are there examples where this relationship works well in society? Are there examples where this relationship does not work well?
- If we are to live out the model of the second chapter of Acts, what does it require of us spiritually? Which

teachings of Jesus would apply? What spiritual qualities were missing from the Levi Hancock story?

### A Trace of Our Communal Beginnings: Community of Christ Reunions

As Christian primitivists, we focused our formative years on recreating Christianity as we understood it in its earliest form. Inspired by the New Testament book *The Acts of the Apostles*, we invited members in the 1830s to give all they had to the church so that the surplus of the wealthy could lift up the poor. This system proved to be far more popular with the poor than the rich and we soon began to move away from attempts at living “all things common.”

We didn’t forget the underlying principle as we continued to work to meet the needs of those around us. We used collective farms in Far West, Missouri; the Female Relief Society in Nauvoo, Illinois; the Order of Enoch in Lamoni, Iowa, and Stewardship communities in Atherton, Missouri. Throughout our history, we have attempted to live our discipleship by offering all we are and have to God’s purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.

In 1883, members of the church met together in the countryside near Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a weeklong gathering. This first “reunion” initiated a beloved and enduring tradition for the Community of Christ. Families slept in tents and cooked for themselves. A reunion committee provided firewood along with hay and water for horses. Preaching and prayer meetings lasted all day from 9:00 in the morning to 9:00 at night. Attendance surpassed even the most optimistic predictions.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### **Building Community Continued...**

After the first reunion, church members wanted to repeat the experience regularly. Organized at a local level, reunions featured guest ministry by missionaries or traveling elders and apostles. By the 1890s, permanent reunion grounds were purchased across the country in Maine, California, Iowa, and elsewhere. Soon, reunions spread as far as Australia, Great Britain, and Tahiti.

Elbert A. Smith (grandson of Joseph Smith, Jr.) described a reunion that occurred on the grounds of Kirtland Temple in 1911:

*I reached Kirtland the second day of the reunion and found that I had been elected to preside... Some 25 or 30 tents were on the ground just back of the temple, and a great many people had taken rooms in the hotel and private houses... Our meeting passed off very pleasantly and profitably. The meetings were spiritual and the solemn and sacred atmosphere of the temple seemed to influence the minds of those who were present. A great many outsiders were present and there were in all ten baptisms. Some forty or fifty of the Canadian Saints were there and enjoyed themselves immensely.*

-Elbert A. Smith

Reunions in the nineteenth century and beyond helped fulfill the Community of Christ desire to “gather to Zion.” It is no coincidence that there are reunion grounds named Tiona Park (Tahitian for Zion) in Australia, Ziontario in Ontario, Canada, and Sionito in Texas. Across generations, members have testified that a week at reunion was like “spending a week in Zion.” For many in Community of Christ, reunion grounds have become

sacred spaces, embedded in our personal spiritual geography.

### **Discussion Questions**

- How is today’s reunion experience similar to our 19th century communal roots in Kirtland?
- How is your experience at reunion different from the communal experience in 1830’s Kirtland?

For many Community of Christ members, church reunion grounds hold a significant place in their life journey. For some, the campgrounds are places where significant historic moments happened in an individual’s life: where they met their spouse, where they shared meaningful moments with family, and a place where they learned life long lessons. For others, the reunion campground holds a significant place in their spiritual journey. The grounds are where they first encountered God, a place of baptism, and ordination.

- Is there a reunion ground that holds special significance in your life? If so, why?
- What would your life’s journey be like without the reunion experience?

Community of Christ members have often remarked that “a week after reunion feels like a week in Zion.” For some, the communal experience of sharing lodging, meals, recreation, and fellowship creates an intimate environment for building relationships and fostering a spirit of peace.

- How has your reunion experience shaped and molded your relationship with Christ?
- How has Community of Christ benefitted from the reunion tradition?



*One of the many reunions held on the grounds of the Kirtland Temple during the first half of the 20th century.*



# Missionary Zeal: Empowered to Share the Gospel Story

## Mission Initiatives

Invite People to Christ

## Enduring Principles

Worth of All Persons

All Are Called

## Materials Needed

- Holy Scriptures
- Doctrine & Covenants

## Missionary Empowerment and the Kirtland Temple

The Kirtland Temple story is filled with missionary zeal and inspiration for sharing the gospel of Christ throughout the world. While traveling west from New York to Missouri in 1830, Parley Pratt encouraged his fellow missionaries to depart from the traditional travel route to visit an old friend living in Mentor, Ohio. Parley was interested in taking the newly published *Book of Mormon* to his former minister, Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon and his followers were quickly converted to the new church and interested in planting a congregation in their area. Within a few months, Joseph and Emma Smith moved to Kirtland and were actively building a new faith community in the northeastern Ohio hills.

The missionary zeal of the early missionaries did not end when Parley and his fellow missionaries departed Kirtland for Missouri in 1831. Many converts were quickly carrying the gospel of Christ far and near. Throughout the *Doctrine and Covenants* the members of our faith community were counseled to believe in their missionary calling and to share the good news of the gospel. Often members felt unsure of themselves and questioned their abilities to represent Christ. Joseph Smith, Sr. was counseled in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 4:

*Now, behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men, therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day; therefore, if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work, for, behold, the field is white already to harvest, and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perish not but bringeth salvation to his soul; and faith, hope, charity, and love, with an eye single to the*

*glory of God, qualifies him for the work. Remember, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.*

Shortly after Joseph and Emma arrived in Kirtland, the faith community was reminded of their missionary calling in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 42:

*I give unto you this first commandment, that ye shall go forth in my name... in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two, in my name, lifting up your voices as with the voice of a trump, declaring my work like unto angels of God; and ye shall go forth baptizing with water, saying, 'Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' And from this place ye shall go forth into the regions westward; and inasmuch as ye shall find them that will receive you, ye shall build up my church in every region.*

Early church members took this counsel to heart and traveled far and near with the gospel message. Their zeal is reflected in the increasing membership of the church during this time as baptism rates grew steadily in Ohio from 1831-37.

Early missionary journeys were not always comfortable experiences for the missionaries. Many were sacrificing a steady income, family life, and personal relationships in order to accept the call of missionary work.



Map by John Hamer, 2010

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Kirtland Temple and the International Mission of the Church

As mentioned in a previous lesson, the missionary zeal of the past and present church is reflected in the design of the Kirtland Temple. The entire upper court (second floor) was devoted to the “school of the apostles.” The school’s main objective was missionary education and empowerment. The design of the pulpits show the class curriculum included the gifts and talents of both the Melchisedec and Aaronic priesthood. As mentioned in President Veazey’s address at the 175th anniversary, the lower court pulpits is the location where Heber C. Kimball was called to the church’s first overseas mission (to the British Isles) in June of 1837. Over eighty years later, in October of 1959 at a High Priests Conference, Roy Cheville stood in the same pulpits and commissioned Blair

Jensen and Charles Neff to take the sacred story to Asia.

### Discussion Questions

It often seems easier to read stories about Parley Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, Charles Neff, and others and feel good about their courage, strength, message and success in a growing church where the gospel is celebrated and shared. When it comes to sharing our witness and inviting others to church today, our own story is often filled with obstacles and distractions.

- What are our hesitations in sharing the gospel with others?
- What are the obstacles that each of us need to overcome?
- What are your missionary stories? Who has led you to the gospel of Christ?
  - Who started your congregation?
  - Who are the historical spiritual heroes of your congregation?
  - Who was a spiritual mentor to you?



*Gomer Griffith (above) was an active missionary and apostle from 1887-1922. He traveled all over the world (Palestine, England, Australia, and North America) as a Community of Christ missionary. In his elder years, Griffith was a congregational leader in Kirtland and led tours of the Kirtland Temple.*

### Life of an Early Missionary

*Illustrative of that early evangelistic effort were two of the missionary teams sent to the middle states and New England. Orson Hyde and Samuel H. Smith, and Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, each twosome working independently of the other, walked many hundreds of miles. They taught from house to house, preached in schoolhouses, public buildings, and in the streets of towns and cities. They went without purse or scrip. They slept in barns and sheds, or sometimes in the open, sheltered only by trees along the roadsides. During 1832 they Baptized upwards of 200 persons while forming church branches in Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania... Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, together with five other elders, began church mission work in England in July 1837. To accept such a calling was to lay aside anxieties arising from their precarious financial straits. The mission itself was risky because Kirtland by then was enduring a severe economic crisis. When Kimball, Hyde, and Russell returned to their homes about nine months later, the Kirtland dream had dissolved in a sea of debt, inner dissent, and persecution. The good news was that they had gone to England ‘without purse or scrip’ and found an audience eager for their message. Within the first year of the church’s presence in England well over 1,500 members had been baptized.*

*-Richard P. Howard, The Church Through the Years, Volume One*

### Class Activity

If time allows, encourage each individual to write down their gospel story. Just as the early church missionaries traveled abroad to share the good news of Christ, what aspects of your life are a reflection of your own missionary message? Below are a few questions that may help individuals gather their own story:

- What lessons have you acquired on your missionary journey?
- How does your testimony reflect the enduring principles and mission initiatives?
- What are you willing to sacrifice in order to share the peace of Christ with others?

# Spiritual Anticipation: Building the Kirtland Temple

## Mission Initiatives

Abolish Poverty, End Suffering  
Develop Disciples to Serve  
Experience Congregations in  
Mission

## Enduring Principles

Grace and Generosity  
Continuing Revelation  
All Are Called  
Unity in Diversity  
Blessings of Community

## Materials Needed

- Holy Scriptures
- Doctrine & Covenants

## Community Involvement in the Planning of Kirtland Temple

Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith's mother, recalled a meeting of the High Priests held in Kirtland on Saturday, June 3, 1833, wherein a discussion was held regarding the building of a house of worship in Kirtland. Lucy remembered:

*...Joseph requested the brethren to each one rise and give his views and after they were through he would give his opinion. They all spoke some thought that it would be better to build a frame others said that a frame was too costly kind of a house and the majority concluded upon putting up a log house and made their calculations about what they could do towards building it. Joseph rose and reminded them that they were not making a house for themselves or any other man but a house for God - And shall we brethren build a house for God of logs?*

-Lucy Mack Smith

Later in the meeting, Joseph shared with the group a revelation that confirmed the community should build such a house and promised that "if you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it." The revelation also encouraged the faith community to anticipate a powerful spiritual experience in the new building, "I give unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high." The anticipation of a spiritual empowerment inspired the saints to make great sacrifices to ensure the construction and completion of Kirtland's "House of the Lord."

## Spiritual Anticipation

Perhaps the single most important reason to build the temple was for the saints to be endowed with power from on high. As mentioned in previous lesson plans, the early faith community was inspired by the examples of the earliest Christians. Their lives in Kirtland were often a reflection of what they read about in Acts II, such as living in gathered community, concern for the plight of the poor, a passion for proclaiming the gospel overseas "to all the world," and their wishes for a powerful spiritual outpouring. The Kirtland saints hoped to be empowered by the same Holy Spirit described in Acts. They believed this outpouring of the Spirit would follow the construction (and dedication) of the temple.

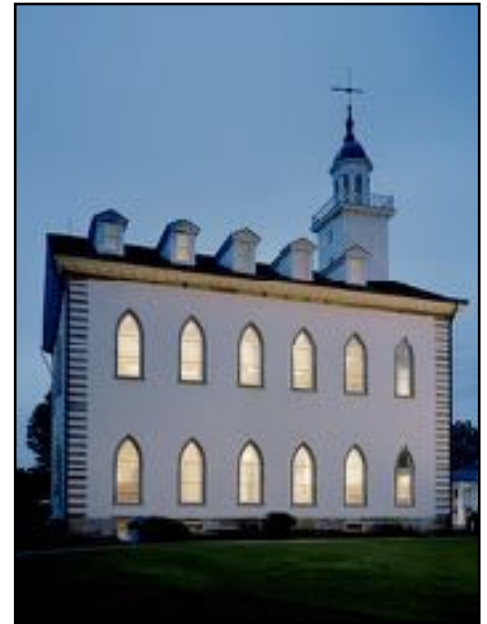
In the months leading up to the

*Let the anointing of thy ministers be sealed upon them with power from on high: let it be fulfilled upon them as upon those on the day of Pentecost: let the gift of tongues be poured out upon they people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof. And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory.*

-Kirtland Temple  
Dedicatory Prayer

the March 27, 1836 dedication, church leaders began meeting on the third floor of the temple to prepare themselves, and the Kirtland community, for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Throughout the construction of the temple, the Kirtland saints believed they were building the literal "House of the Lord." They believed that in order to experience the Divine, one must prepare themselves spiritually through study, fasting and prayer. As the church leaders prepared for the dedication, they often met in small and large groups in the attic story of the temple beginning in January of 1836. A number of those in attendance later recorded their experiences in journals, letters and newspaper accounts. Throughout their preparation, there was an outpouring of spiritual empowerment shared. People recorded seeing angels, speaking in tongues, experiencing visions and feeling an incredible sense of comfort and reassurance.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE



Evening view of the Kirtland Temple and view of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s office on the third floor.  
Photos by Val Brinkerhoff, copyright Community of Christ

### Spiritual Anticipation Continued...

A number of the meetings held on the third floor were recorded by Oliver Cowdery in his "1836 Sketch Book." Following one such experience on the third floor he journaled:

*In the evening I met with the officers of the church in the Lord's house. The Spirit was poured out - I saw the glory of God, like a great cloud, come down and rest upon the house, and fill the same like a mighty rushing wind. I also saw cloven tongues, like as of fire rest upon many, (for there were 316 present) while they spake with other tongues and prophesied.*

-Oliver Cowdery, 1836

Out of this time of spiritual anticipation and blessings, W. W. Phelps penned the hymn, "The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning."

### Discussion Questions

- Use your imagination and think how you would feel in your anticipation of building the Kirtland Temple?
- What spiritual yearnings might you have during that historic time?

### Spiritual Anticipation in the 1920s

The spiritual anticipation shared by members of our faith community did not stop after many of the saints departed Kirtland in 1838. For decades, church members entered the doors of the temple hoping and praying for a powerful experience like those shared in the 1830s. Accounts of a great spiritual outpouring appear at RLDS conferences in the 1880-1890s. Members left accounts of meaningful moments shared with strangers, powerful guidance experienced during evangelist

blessings, and testimonies of hope and assurance during times of need while in worship.

Apostle Gomer Griffith, a longtime Kirtland resident and temple guide from the 1880s throughout the 1940s, reminisced about a particularly memorable experience in a 1935 *Saints Herald* that reflects our enduring principle "grace and generosity:

*About 1920, during reunion, there was also a never-to-be-forgotten day; a prayer meeting lasting from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock noon, during which angels were seen visions were had, seventeen prophecies, four or five gifts of tongues, and many testimonies of God's goodness given under the power of the Spirit. This meeting was*

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Gomer Griffith's Story Continued...

*only intended to last two hours and then there was to be a preaching service, but the power of God was so great those in charge deemed it wise to let the meeting continue.*

*At the close of the meeting a offering was taken which netted between four and five hundred dollars which is proof conclusive that there is nothing like the touch of the Spirit of the Lord to loosen up the purse strings.*

-Gomer Griffith, 1935

At the 100th anniversary of the Kirtland Temple dedication, President Frederick Madison Smith called on the church to remember the anticipation and empowerment of the early saints. More importantly, he encouraged members to be inspired by the Kirtland story and to rededicate themselves to renewing the church's divine call:

*In celebrating the anniversary we will at once rejoice in the achievements of the Saints while struggling at Kirtland and rededicate ourselves, talents, zeal, possession, and powers to the great and glorious task of making Zion real, and thus demonstrate to the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a power in social betterment and salvation.*

-Frederick M. Smith, 1936

Spiritual Anticipation and commitment are not limited to Frederick M. Smith and Gomer Griffith. There are ample accounts of people hearing angels during the early RLDS conferences at the end of the 19th century, priesthood meetings included people speaking in tongues and under the influence of the spirit in the 1940s and 1950s. Visitors on tour and worship service guests today continue to bear their testimonies of spiritual encounters with the Divine everyday.

### Discussion Questions

Gomer Griffith described a worship experience that created a spiritual awakening for those who were in attendance. At the end of the service, the guests gave generously in an offering. Gomer Griffith stated the experience was "proof conclusive that there is nothing like the touch of the Spirit of the Lord to loosen up the purse strings."

- In your own life, have you experienced a connection between spiritual life and generosity? Have you witnessed this connection in others?

Take a moment to explore Frederick M. Smith's quote at the 100th anniversary of the Kirtland Temple.

- What is your reaction to F. M. Smith's call to the 1930s Community of Christ? Is there anything in his words that you find empowering for today's church?



### Class Activity

Take a moment to consider your pilgrimage to the Kirtland Temple. As you reflect on your own anticipation, consider the questions below:

- What is it you anticipate for the journey ahead?

Describe your spiritual anticipation.

- Like the 1830s Kirtland faith community, how do you feel God wants to bless you (or empower you) in this pilgrimage experience?

### Closing Hymn, "Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning"

With his poetic gifts, W.W. Phelps formulated the words of a hymn that captured the powerful spirit of this remarkable period. Visions and prophecies were enjoyed on several occasions; in one particular quorum session, those attending reported "a great flow of the Holy Spirit... like fire in their bones so that they could not hold their peace, but were constrained to cry 'hosanna to God and the Lamb...'"

Immediately after its publication in *The Messenger and Advocate*, the new hymn was printed as the last entry in Emma Smith's new hymnal, a hymnal printed only a few weeks before the dedication. Set to a stirring English tune, the hymn was sung at the temple dedication by a large choir situated in all four corners of the lower court.

# Sacred Space: Importance of the Kirtland Temple Story

## Mission Initiatives

Develop Disciples to Serve

## Enduring Principles

Grace and Generosity

Worth of All Persons

## Materials Needed

- *Doctrine & Covenants* Section 162
- Object that relates to a personal experience

## Discovering the Many Ways History Shapes Who We are Today

In *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 162, we read, “Listen to your own journey as a people, for it is a sacred journey and it has taught you many things you must know for the journey yet to come.” Throughout this series, we have looked into our past for meaningful lessons and spiritual insight for the journey ahead. In this particular lesson, we will dive deeper into our individual and shared stories to discover how much of who we are today is the result of the sacrifice and dedication of our forbearers.

## Heritage and Identity

A favorite museum artifact among Kirtland Temple visitors is a piece of temple stucco (thick plaster from the exterior walls of the temple) that was removed in 1955. What appears to most as a discarded piece of plaster represents the sacrifice and dedication of an impoverished group of people as they constructed their first “House of the Lord.” Most Community of Christ members today know very little about the history of the temple. However, many members will remember the story of women smashing their fine china and placing the broken pieces into the stucco to create a sparkling effect on the exterior of the temple.

Although historians struggle today to find an account of women smashing their fine china for the temple stucco, historians have not struggled to find stories of the Saints sacrificing to build the temple. Truman Coe, a local protestant minister who lived in Kirtland while the Saints were building the temple shared that the women especially were giving up the “necessaries of life.” At this time, “necessaries” were defined as the essentials of life such as food, clothing, and shelter. The women were giving up their family’s food in order to feed the workers. Women were

sewing and mending clothes for the laborers. Multiple families living in small frame homes were sacrificing much needed space to house those working on the temple. Truman Coe described the homes that many of the Saints inhabited as “a grotesque assemblage of hovels and shanties and small houses have been thrown up wherever they could find a footing... very few of all these cabins would be accounted fit for human habitations.” And yet, the early faith community managed to construct an extraordinary house of worship that cost between \$40-70,000 at a time when the average Kirtland family earned around \$400-500 a year.

The Kirtland Temple stucco represents more than just a piece of 1830’s plaster, it symbolizes the sacrifice and dedication of hundreds of church members working together to establish a Zionic community. The piece of stucco reminds us that the early faith community was sacrificing much more than decorative plates, they were giving up the essentials of life. Community of Christ today is a product of their dedication and sacrificial generosity.

## Discussion Questions

The Kirtland Temple stucco holds special meaning for the spiritual journey of Community of Christ.

- As you consider your own journey, what objects do you have that represent significant moments in your relationship with God?
- What objects represent powerful lessons in your own spiritual journey?
- How has history helped shape your identity?

## Heritage and Message

As the first missionaries traveled west in 1830, Parley Pratt convinced his fellow missionaries to stop in Kirtland, Ohio, to visit his former minister Sidney Rigdon. Sidney was one of the more prominent religious leaders in northern Ohio, at one time overseeing several congregations including one in Kirtland. After listening to Parley’s experience and reading the *Book of Mormon*, Sidney and his wife, Phoebe, joined the church.

Sidney’s conversion led to many others in the northeastern Ohio area to join the growing faith community. A number of the early converts would take significant

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Heritage and Message Continued...

leadership roles in the early church. Edward Partridge, a hatter from a neighboring town, became the church's first bishop. Sidney Rigdon became a member of the first presidency, while Lyman Wight and Orson Hyde were later ordained apostles. The experience and testimonies of the first converts inspired and empowered others to join the infant Latter Day Saint church. By the time Joseph and Emma Smith arrived in Kirtland a few months later, the growing number of newly baptized members had tripled church membership.

### Discussion Questions

The experience and testimonies of the first converts in Ohio inspired and empowered others to join the infant Latter Day Saint church.

- Consider for a moment the testimony and experience of those who have gone before you. Who were the spiritual giants in your life as you have grown in your faith journey?
- How has your own sacred story helped mold your message and ministry?
- How has someone else's sacred story impacted your life?

### Heritage and Vision

Roy Cheville wrote, "When something significant happens in a dynamic society, the people sing of it." Our historic hymns often reveal our past struggles, pain, inspiration, perseverance, dedication, and theology. Hymns also show the changes that have taken place in church belief and spiritual priorities.

Our hymns have the ability to remind us of personal experiences that bring us both joy and sorrow. There are hymns we sing as a faith community that help unite us as one. For many, the memory of singing the "Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning," with hundreds of fellow church members at World Conference is a powerful spiritual and emotional experience that will often come to mind each time they sing the historic hymn.

One of the more popular hymns in 1830s Kirtland was W. W. Phelps' hymn "The Earth Was Once a Garden Place." After reading the *Book of Mormon* in 1831, W. W.

Phelps moved his family to Kirtland to learn more about this new church. Phelps was both a blessing to the new movement and to Emma Smith. He assisted her in



collecting and editing hymns for the first church hymnal. Phelps was also a talented hymn writer with the ability to capture both the excitement and profound hope of the new church in his hymns. His hymn, "The Earth Was Once a Garden Place," was sung at the Kirtland Temple dedication and was included in all of Emma Smith's hymnals. The hymn was sung to a delightful American folk tune that lifted the spirits of the early Saints.

Take a moment to read the words to Phelps' hymn as it appears in the 1835 hymnal:

*This earth was once a garden place,  
with all her glories common;  
And men did live a holy race,*

*And worship Jesus face to face,  
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.*

*We read that Enoch walk'd with God  
Above the pow'r of Mammon;  
While Zion spread herself abroad  
And saints and angels sung aloud  
In Adam-ondi-Ahman*

*Her land was good and greatly blest,  
Beyond old Israel's Canaan;  
Her fame was known from east to west;  
Her peace was great, and pure the rest  
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.*

*Hosanna to such days to come-  
The Savior's second comin'-  
When all the earth in glorious bloom,  
Affords the saints a holy home  
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman.*

### Discussion Questions

- What does Phelps' hymn say about the hopes and aspirations of the early faith community?
- Is there a hymn in your life that reminds you of a significant moment in your own faith journey?

# Pilgrimage to Kirtland: What Are You Seeking?

## Mission Initiatives

- Pursue Peace on Earth
- Develop Disciples to Serve

## Enduring Principles

- Continuing Revelation
- All Are Called
- Responsible Choices
- Worth of All Persons

## Materials Needed

- “Kirtland Temple: Today and Tomorrow” PowerPoint

*The earliest recorded pilgrimage is accorded to Abraham, who left Ur 4,000 years ago, seeking the inscrutable presence of God in the vast desert. His descendants Moses, Paul, and Mohammed embody the notion of sacred journeys. The Bible, the Torah and the Koran, the holy texts of Hinduism and Buddhism - all admonish their followers to flock to the birthplaces and tombs of the prophets, the sites where miracles occurred, or the paths they walked in search of enlightenment.*

- Phil Cousineau,  
*The Art of Pilgrimage*

## Pilgrimage

Pilgrims that travel to sacred places go with some kind of purpose in mind. Some pilgrims are seeking spiritual renewal by going to places where God's presence has blessed others before. Others are seeking answers to questions, guidance and direction, some pray for healing. The hope is that as the pilgrim travels he/she will be able to release those issues in their lives that draw them away from God and the act of “letting go” will empower each participant to grow closer to God. Other practices that can increase intimacy with God are surrender, gratitude, humility, confession, repentance, prayer, scripture study, meditation, and self-examination.

The pilgrimage can lead to a turning point in the life of the pilgrim that may include setting new life and spiritual goals, acts of kindness, a life of simplicity, or a plan of service. In the Community of Christ tradition, a spiritual

pilgrimage can be traveling to reunions, youth camps, World Conferences, retreats, and historic sites. Many people come to the Kirtland Temple to hear the story of the Saints in the 1830s, to worship in the Temple and to pursue spiritual disciplines in the Kirtland Temple Spiritual Formation Center.



*Mustard seed growing alongside the Jordan River in Israel*

## Why Kirtland?

Kirtland is considered sacred space by many. It is a place of remembrance where people gathered in the 1830s because they believed in a vision of a Christ centered community described in the the *Holy Scriptures*. Kirtland is where the plans and purposes for a temple were received through the power of revelation by the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.. Despite the economic, social and political challenges, people gathered to Kirtland to help build the Temple. Today, Kirtland is remembered as a place where people were united by the Spirit and where many discovered their unique and sacred calling.

Kirtland was a place where conversions and baptisms took place, where people's lives were transformed under very difficult conditions. The Temple was a place of powerful worship experiences, where people approached their Lord in humbleness, where leaders publicly confessed their failings, angels were seen, and the Lord Jesus had appeared.

Some would refer to the Kirtland Temple as a “thin” place, a place where there is very little separation between humans and God. People today journey to Kirtland to hear the story, remember the Saints, to find renewal and to worship in a “thin” place in order to deepen their relationship with God.



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE



*Kirtland Temple garden pathway and fall foliage view from the tall Gothic windows of the temple*

### Discussion Questions

- Based on your reading and your personal reflection, why did the Saints gather to Kirtland? What was the attraction?
- In your religious life, what are you willing to sacrifice in order to build community? The Kingdom?
- How would you describe the “primitive movement” of the 1830s as it relates to the early church?

Take a moment to read the “1836 Prayer of Dedication” and “Prayer of Dedication/Consecration” (see appendix for both readings).

- Based on your reading of the “1836 Prayer of Dedication,” how would you articulate the vision and purpose of the Saints in the 1830s?
- What elements of the 1836 prayer resonated for you? Were there elements that related to your congregation life and community?
- As you pondered the “Prayer of Dedication/Consecration” by David Brock, what words would you use to describe the purpose of the new visitor and spiritual formation center in its role to amplify the story of the Temple?
- How does David Brock’s prayer connect to your congregation’s house of worship? How does it relate to your congregation’s sacred purpose?

Invite the group to read the testimony, “Kirtland: Where We Came From,” by Bob Kyser (see appendix). The testimony describes a visit to the Kirtland Temple by the Community of Christ Presidents of Seventy in 2008.

- What is your reaction to Bob’s experience?
- What are you able to take away from the Presidents of Seventy experience in the Temple?

### Class Activity

Begin the PowerPoint presentation, “Kirtland Temple: Today and Tomorrow.” The presentation is an introduction to today’s purpose of the Kirtland Temple and Kirtland Temple Spiritual Formation Center.

- What is your reaction to the current activities and outreach taking place at the Kirtland Temple today?
- How do today’s activities and events in Kirtland relate to the original purposes of the Kirtland Temple and the 1830s faith community?
- As you consider a pilgrimage to Kirtland, what would be your reasons to visit the Kirtland Temple? What are you seeking?

# Epilogue

By Bruce Crockett

*To remember the church's early Kirtland experience is to appreciate the courage, resourcefulness, and faith of a people who in many ways are similar to us. They knew the joy of service and community. They felt the pain and frustration of plans gone awry. They sacrificed to see that the church reached out to spread the gospel message. They bore witness to the power and presence of God among them. They also left ample record of their pain and sorrow at not achieving all that they felt God was calling them to do and become. Kirtland thus provides a mirror of the church today. To connect with those who built Kirtland is to draw strength and new understanding for our present season of rigorous discipleship.*

-Richard P. Howard, *The Church Through the Years, Volume One*

## Life after Pilgrimage

Deep within Community of Christ heritage and the twelve lesson plans shared throughout the Kirtland pilgrimage experience, the sacred purpose and calling of Community of Christ continues to shine through. In our best moments we continue to feel that we are involved in a “great and marvelous work” with God. Our observations of the world around us inform and remind us of the suffering that abounds, both spiritually and economically. The *Doctrine and Covenants* 1830s proclamation to the early missionaries, “the field is white and ready to harvest,” continues to ring true as people search for community and yearn for the comfort and reassurance that they have not been forgotten. The message of “all are called,” “worth of all persons,” “blessings of community,” “continuing revelation,” and “grace and generosity,” continue to breathe hope into an often times hopeless world. Our shared history in the gospel, the “Good News” of Christ’s life and message must be trumpeted to the masses with the passionate commitment, sincere intention, and contagious enthusiasm of our 1830s forbearers.

People participate in pilgrimage to find renewal, inspiration, release from unproductive habits, and a path towards new practices that will bring them closer to God. The pilgrimage experience provides a renewed energy for the people, a new hope for the congregation’s future, and a transformational life - for those who experienced the pilgrimage and those whose lives they touch by the witness of the spiritual experience. As the journey to Kirtland draws to an end, we must ask ourselves: What will you do with this experience? What is God’s invitation to me, to my congregation? Do I feel inspired, unsettled? Is the Holy Spirit prodding me? How?

Many years ago, when I was contemplating baptism in the church, I was “fence sitting,” waiting for that decisive clue that would remove any doubt. The answer I was seeking came in the form of a question while I was attending my first Community of Christ reunion. While standing in line at a water fountain, I noticed the campground caretaker standing in line ahead of me. As he finished his drink he turned to me and spoke to me under the influence of the Spirit and asked, “What are you waiting for?” I did not have a good answer to his question. His simple question at the drinking fountain line became a remarkable invitation that would lead to a profound transformation in my life.

“What are you waiting for?” Perhaps that is a good question (invitation) to all of us today. When it comes to sharing the rich gospel with others, opening our hearts and minds to the peace of Jesus Christ and welcoming people into the Community of Christ, what are we waiting for?

# Kirtland Temple Prayer of Dedication

**Read by Joseph Smith, Jr., at the Dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Sunday, March 27, 1836**

*Prayer appears in the original 1836 text*

Thanks be to thy name, O Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and shewest mercy unto thy servants, who walk uprightly before thee with all their hearts: thou who hast commanded they servants to build an house to thy name in this place. (Kirtland.) And now thou beholdest, O Lord, that so thy servants have done, according to thy commandment. And now we ask thee, holy Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of thy bosom, in whose name alone salvation can be administered to the children of men: we ask thee, O lord, to accept of this house, the workmanship of the hands of us, thy servants, which thou didst command us to build; for thou knowest that we have done this work through great tribulation: and out of our poverty we have given of our substance to build a house to thy name, that the Son of Man might have a place to manifest himself to his people.

And as thou has said, in a revelation given unto us, calling us thy friends, saying "Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you; and as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom: Seek learning, even by study, and also by faith.

"Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory a house of order, a house of God: that your in comings may be in the name of the

Lord; that your out goings may be in the name of the Lord: that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands to the Most High."

And now, holy Father, we ask thee to assist us, thy people with thy grace in calling our solemn assembly, that it may be done to thy honor, and to thy divine acceptance, and in a manner that we may be found worthy, in thy sight, to secure a fulfillment of the promises which thou hast made unto us thy people, in the revelations given unto us: that thy glory may rest down upon thy people, and upon this thy house, which we now dedicate to thee, that it may be sanctified and consecrated to be holy, and that thy holy presence may be continually in this house; and that all people who shall enter upon the threshold [threshold] of the Lord's house may feel thy power and be constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

And do thou grant, holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house, may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning, even by study, and also by faith; as thou hast said; and that they may grow up in thee and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing: and that this house may be a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of glory, and of God, even thy house: that all the incomings of thy people, into this house, may be in the name of the Lord; that all their outgoings, from this house, may be in the name of the Lord; that all their salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with holy hands, uplifted to the Most High; and that no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into thy house to pollute it.

And when thy people transgress, any of them, they may speedily repent and return unto thee, and find favor in thy sight, and be restored to the blessings which thou hast ordained, to be poured out upon those who shall reverence thee in this thy house.

And we ask thee, holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house, armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them; and from this place they may bear exceeding great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth, that they may know that this is thy work, and that thou hast put forth thy hands, to fulfill that which thou has spoken by the mouths of thy prophets concerning the last days.

We ask thee, holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship and honorable hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations, and for eternity, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself; that no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people, upon whom thy name shall be put in this house: and if any people shall rise against this people, that thine anger be kindled against them: and if they shall smite this people, thou wilt smite them—thou wilt fight for thy people as thou didst in the day of battle, that they may be delivered from the hands of all their enemies.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Kirtland Temple Prayer of Dedication Continued...

We ask thee, holy Father, to confound, and astonish, and bring to shame, and confusion, all those who have spread lying reports abroad over the world against thy servant, or servants, if they will not repent when the everlasting gospel shall be proclaimed in their ears, and that all their works may be brought to nought, and be swept away by the hail, and by the judgments, which thou wilt sent upon them in thine anger, that there may be an end to lyings and slanders against thy people: for thou knowest, O Lord, that thy servants have been innocent before thee in bearing record of thy name for which they have suffered these things; therefore we plead before thee for a full and complete deliverance from under this yoke. Break it off O Lord: break it off from the necks of thy servants, by thy power, that we may rise up in the midst of this generation and do thy work!

O Jehovah, have mercy upon this people, and as all men sin, forgive the transgressions of thy people, and let them be blotted out forever. Let the anointing of thy ministers be sealed upon them with power from on high: let it be fulfilled upon them as upon those on the day of Pentecost: let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof. And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory.

Put upon thy servants the testimony of the covenant, that when they go out and proclaim thy word, they may seal up the law, and prepare the hearts of thy saints for all those judgements thou art about to send, in thy wrath, upon the inhabitants of the earth, because of their transgressions, that thy people may not faint in the day of trouble.

And whatever city thy servants shall enter, and the people of that city receive their testimony, let thy peace and thy salvation be upon that city, that they may gather out of that city the righteous, that they may come forth to Zion, or to her stakes, the place of thine appointment, with songs of everlasting joy, and until this be accomplished let not thy judgments fall upon that city.

And whatever city thy servants shall enter, and the people of that city receive not the testimony of thy servants, and thy servants warn them to save themselves from this untoward generation, let it be upon that city according to that which thou hast spoken, by the mouths of thy prophets, but deliver thou, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, thy servants from their hands, and cleanse them from their blood. O Lord, we delight not in the destruction of our fellow men: their souls are precious before thee; but thy word must be fulfilled: —help thy servants to say, with thy grace assisting them, thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours.

We know that thou hast spoken by the mouth of thy prophets, terrible things concerning the wicked, in the last days, that thou wilt pour out thy judgments, without measure: therefore, O Lord, deliver thy people from the calamity of the wicked; enable thy servants to seal up the law and bind up the testimony, that they may be prepared against the day of burning.

We ask thee, holy Father, to remember those who have been driven by the inhabitants of Jackson county, Missouri, from the lands of their inheritance, and break off, O Lord, this yoke of affliction, that has been put upon them. Thou knowest, O Lord, that they have been greatly oppressed, and afflicted, by wicked men, and our hearts flow out in sorrow because of their grievous burdens. O Lord, how long wilt thou suffer this people to bear this affliction, and the cries of their innocent ones to ascend up in thine ears, and their blood to come up in testimony before thee, and not make a display of thy power in their behalf?

Have mercy, O Lord, upon that wicked mob, who have driven thy people, that they may cease to spoil, that they may repent of their sins, if repentance is to be found; but if they will not, make bear thine arm O Lord, and redeem that which thou didst appoint a Zion unto thy people.

And if it can not be otherwise, that the cause of thy people may not fail before thee, may thine anger be kindled and thine indignation fall upon them, that they may be wasted away, both root and branch from under heaven; but in as much as they will repent, thou art gracious and merciful, and will turn away thy wrath, when thou lookest upon the face of thine anointed.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth: have mercy upon the rulers of our land: may those principles which were so honorably and nobly defended: vis, the constitution of our land, by our fathers be established forever. Remember the kings, the princes, the nobles, and the great ones of the earth, and all people; and the churches: all the poor, the needy and the afflicted ones of the earth, that their hearts may be softened when thy servants shall go out from thy house, O Jehovah, to bear testimony of thy name, that their prejudices may give way before the truth, and thy people may obtain favor in the sight of all, that all the ends of the earth may know that we thy servants have heard

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Kirtland Temple Prayer of Dedication Continued...

thy voice, and that thou hast sent us, that from among all these thy servants, the sons of Jacob, may gather out the righteous to build a holy city to thy name, as thou hast commanded them.

We ask thee to appoint unto Zion other stakes besides this one, which thou hast appointed, that the gathering of thy people may roll on in great power and majesty, that thy work may be cut short in righteousness.

Now these words, O Lord, we have spoken before thee, concerning the revelations and commandments which thou hast given unto us, who are identified with the Gentiles;—But thou knowest that we have a great love for the children of Jacob who have been scattered upon the mountains; for a long time in a cloudy and dark day.

We therefore ask thee to have mercy upon the children of Jacob, that Jerusalem, from this hour, may begin to be redeemed; and the yoke of bondage may begin to be broken off from the house of David, and the children of Judah may begin to return to the lands which thou didst give to Abraham, their father, and cause that the remnants of Jacob, who have been cursed and smitten, because of their transgression, to be converted from their wild and savage condition, to the fulness of the everlasting gospel, that they may lay down their weapons of bloodshed and cease their rebellions. And may all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee.

O Lord, remember thy servant Joseph Smith, jr. and all his afflictions and persecutions, how he has covenanted with Jehovah and vowed to thee, O mighty God of Jacob, and the commandments which thou hast given unto him, and that he hath sincerely strove to do thy will. —Have mercy, O Lord, upon his wife and children, that they may be exalted in thy presence, and preserved by thy fostering hand. Have mercy upon all their immediate connexions [connections], that their prejudices may be broken up, and swept away as with a flood, that they may be converted and redeemed with Israel and know that thou art God. Remember, O Lord, the presidents, even all the presidents of thy church, that thy right hand may exalt them with all their families, and their immediate connexions [connections], that their names may be perpetuated and had in everlasting remembrance from generation to generation.

Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connexions [connections], with all their sick and afflicted ones, with all the poor and meek of the earth, that the kingdom which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth, that thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, and be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth, that thy glory may fill the earth.

That when the trump shall sound for the dead, we shall be caught up in the cloud to meet thee, that we may ever be with the Lord, that our garments may be pure, that we may be clothed upon with robes of righteousness, with palms in our hands, and crowns of glory upon our heads; and reap eternal joy for all our sufferings. O Lord, God Almighty hear us in these our petitions, and answer us from heaven, thy holy habitation, where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, might, dominion, truth, justice, judgement, mercy and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting.

O hear, O hear, O hear us, O Lord, and answer these petitions, and accept the dedication of this house, unto thee, the work of our hands, which we have built unto thy name; and also this church to put upon it thy name. And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright shining seraphs, around thy throne with acclamations of praise, singing hosanna to God and the Lamb: and let these thine anointed ones be clothed with salvation, and thy saints shout aloud for joy. AMEN AND AMEN.

# Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center: Prayer of Dedication/Consecration

**Delivered by Presiding Evangelist David Brock at the Dedication of the Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center, June 9, 2007**

Sacred space matters to us, God: land on which to set our feet, a dwelling to call home. Our souls are drawn to "thin places" - places where spirit and element mingle more easily; places where the veil is torn from time to time.

We climb mountains to meet you. You find us in the grotto, or at the mouth of the cave. We hide in the crevice of the rock to catch a glimpse of you as you pass. A bush bursts into Spirit's flame and we take off our shoes. An angel wrestles with us in the night and we walk wounded into the sunrise. We build altars or shrines to mark those "thin places" of encounter. We build a temple and you invite us in.

Today, we look across the garden to a house made holy by the longings and sacrifices of our forebearers who responded to the call to build a sanctuary and symbol of shalom: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."

*This* building is not *that* building. But this center *is* a place that tangibly expresses what was envisioned in sacramental moments in *that* House of the Lord.

This, too, is your place, God, and these are your people: generous givers, creative planners, dedicated workers, people with a history, people in mission, people seeking identity, people longing for your presence in a world that so easily forgets, people still believing the dream that brought other pilgrims to this place 175 years ago.

We dedicate *this* place to your will and work and wonder.

We dedicate it to the man who spies the sign on the highway and decides he's got thirty minutes to look at a piece of history and continue his search for places not seen before.

We dedicate it to the busload of Restoration movement sojourners on their way from Vermont through New York, then onward from Ohio to Illinois, Missouri, and Utah.

We dedicate it to the child who sees an artifact or hears an anecdote from history that sparks her mind and stirs a longing in her heart to find in the past that which can help her understand her life and her times.

We dedicate it to the solitary wanderer aching for a sense of the sacred when so much of his own life is what he now considers profane.

We dedicate it to the pastor who needs a sabbatical place where she trusts the Holy offers forgiveness, healing, and courage.

We dedicate this center to the small rural congregation searching anxiously for assurance that God still has a calling for a dwindling and aging membership.

We dedicate this center to the large suburban congregation seeking clarity of vision and renewal of conviction about its mission to its neighbors at home and across the globe.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

### Prayer of Dedication/Consecration Continued...

We dedicate it to the honor of those who built the temple and we dedicate it to generations not yet born. We pray future visits to this place will help shape their lives into the practices of peace.

We dedicate it with hope to purposes and possibilities not yet envisioned by those who dreamed of and built this center.

We ask you to accept this building as a gift of generous response, God. And, with your acceptance:

***We consecrate it as a center of hospitality.*** To anyone who walks through these doors, may they know us as a welcoming, open-arm, open-door people. May they know they are valued and worthy and loved.

***We set this land and building apart to help shape our identity as Community of Christ.*** May this be a place where we share our faith story openly, honestly, and graciously; a place where we offer lessons from our historical journey to guide our feet toward tomorrow.

***We consecrate this center as a place of encounter with the Holy Spirit.*** We know the temple was built for spiritual empowerment. We know it as a place of Pentecostal encounter. May this be a still-point on the Way, a transformative center, a place of silence and beauty and communion with Mystery, a place where followers are formed into the likeness of Christ.

***We consecrate this sacred geography and architecture as a place of holistic formation.*** May it be a shaping place, a studying and practicing place, an integrating place where wholeness of spirit and body takes on form in incarnational discipleship. Draw us here to be deepened and healed, named and remade. Send us out from this place spiritually and physically empowered to embrace the mission of Jesus as healers and formers of sacred community.

In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen



*Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center*

# Kirtland: Where We Came From

## By Bob Kyser

*The seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses... in all the world...*  
- Doctrine & Covenants 104:11e

I have visited Kirtland, Ohio, on many occasions. These visits included opportunities to tour and worship in the Kirtland Temple, share in priesthood retreats and leadership gatherings, and, on one occasion, even to go fishing nearby. Every one of the experiences was memorable.

In April 2008, as the time approached for the Council of Presidents of Seventy to journey from Wales, India, and various locations in the United States to this special place, my anticipation began to grow. I knew this would be the first time for several of my colleagues to be in Kirtland and experience the temple. Only one of us had been to the new Kirtland Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center. I was not prepared for the spiritual encounter that would be ours as we arrived for our week-long retreat.

### An Experience with the Past

The very first seventy of the church were called to this office in March 1835 and no doubt ordained on the very ground over which we were walking. They would have been sent from this place as missionaries to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was not new information of which I suddenly became aware. However, throughout the next several days I kept thinking over and over, *This is where we came from*. This is where the ministry of the seventy in the Community of Christ originated. My personal experience was to feel a connection with generations of seventy who have responded to the call over 175 years ago to be “*especial witnesses in all the world.*”

### Experience with the Present

When we walked through the front doors of the new visitor center, I felt something. Partly it was the greeting by Evangelist Bruce Crockett, director of the Spiritual Formation Center, who was to be our spiritual guide during our retreat, as well as the warm welcome from other staff. Perhaps it was also seeing firsthand the newly created space and interpretive witness of our church’s story, past and present. It is difficult to express in words my emotions at that very moment, but it felt as if I had come home. I was aware of a new generation of stewards who had given generously and sacrificially that this dream might become a reality. I was impacted again by the realization of a dream of my brother-in-law, Kim Loving, who saw Kirtland Temple and the center as more than a celebration of the past but a spiritual hope for the future. In the coming hours I would also come to understand that I needed to be in this place.

The first day we spent with President Stephen Veazey, exploring the call of the seventy in the context of Doctrine and Covenants 163:5, including what it might mean for the seventy to be “Forerunners of Christ’s peace” and “preparing the way for apostolic witness to be more readily received.” This rich experience was followed by two days with Bruce Crockett, who led us in worship, guided us in meditation, posed critical questions (the response to which called us to look within ourselves individually as well as a council), laughed and shared fellowship with us, and opened us to an endowment of the Holy Spirit.



*Presidents of Seventy at the Kirtland Temple in April 2008*



## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE

*Let the truths of my gospel be proclaimed as widely and as far as the dedication of the Saints, especially through the exercise of their temporal stewardship, will allow.*

- Doctrine & Covenants 153:9a

### **“Kirtland: Where We Came From” Continued...**

Over the years I have toured many historic sites in various places around the world. I believe that very few, if any, of those tours could compare with our “tower to basement” experience with Barb Walden, site coordinator. We crawled on our hands and knees, climbed ladders, looked out over the landscape as seen from the bell tower, and listened to her testimony of people and events.

It was remarkable, and it connected us during and after the tour with this sacred space. One evening we gathered on the third floor of the temple for worship. It was a time of sharing and healing for us. We experienced the Holy Spirit as we worshiped in our native languages of Spanish, Welsh, Tamil, and English. We shared tears and laughter and became better equipped for our individual and collective ministries. It was a time and place that I will long remember.

### **Experience with the Future**

I speak for my colleagues in the Council of Presidents of Seventy when I suggest that we did not dwell in the past or even in the present. Our journey that week brought together all three dimensions of life's experience. Certainly we engaged history as expressed in our own stories, the story of the seventy, and the story of the church. Most certainly we engaged the here and now and the realities of both the joys and struggles of mission. The recurring call during this entire retreat was to embrace the future.

Our closing experience involved sitting around a table sharing the sacrament of Communion and watching as the sun set, darkness came, and the lighted temple became the living expression of the “beacon on a hill.” It was breathtaking and soul impacting as the image of our past called us to embrace the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ as together we journeyed into the future. As we prepared to depart to various parts of the world, these words were shared with us:

“You are very gifted ministers, unique ministers. You do not have to be anyone else except yourself because it is you that God has called. Do not be caught up in the illusions of finding validation from others, or comparing yourself to others. The only validation you need has already been given by the One who called you. God invites you to pay attention to the movement of his Spirit in your own life as well as the lives of those you serve. As you extend the invitation to others, know that God extends the invitation to you to continually explore and work on the interior of your being, your soul. And as you explore you will continue to experience uninvited moments of grace that will surprise you, uplift you, assure you, and strengthen you.”

I felt that these words shared with us should also be shared with you because I am convinced the message is for every seeker, disciple, and leader. As we left we were invited back with the assurance, “You will always have a home here to come to whenever you need. it.” I came from there and I will be going back.

I know it is not possible for all to go to Kirtland. For those who can, individually or in groups, I encourage you to go even if you have been before. For those who cannot, this invitation is about our homes and congregations becoming temples and sanctuaries where those who need a place of safety and hospitality are welcomed and to which they will want to come back.

## KIRTLAND TEMPLE PILGRIMAGE WAS PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP BY:

### *Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation*



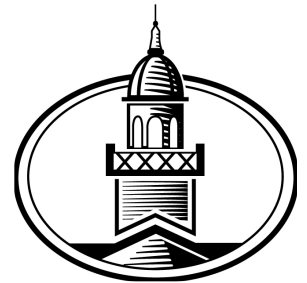
The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, formerly the Restoration Trail Foundation (RTF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation founded by Community of Christ in 1970. The mission of the Foundation is to support the preservation and maintenance of all Community of Christ historic sites. In addition to raising funds for site preservation and

maintenance, the Foundation advocates for the historic sites, develops educational resources for eager educators, promotes volunteer and internship opportunities, and helps promote appreciation for Community of Christ heritage. For more information about the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation and to learn more about how you can help share and preserve Community of Christ historic sites, visit:

[www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org](http://www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org)

### *Kirtland Temple Spiritual Formation Center*

The Kirtland Temple Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center combines the two disciplines of church history and spiritual formation. Both are reflections on the past, interpreted by many voices that may be searching for relevancy and application in the present. The Kirtland Spiritual Formation Center is a place of worship, formation and praxis. Participants worship in the chapel or in the Temple. In the Temple, worshippers experience four corners ministry similar to what was practiced in the 1830s that included prayer and testimony, the sacraments of communion and administration, preaching and hymn singing. The formation center offers classes in prayer, discernment, meditation, group spiritual direction and other topics. For more information about classes and volunteer opportunities at the Kirtland Temple Spiritual Formation Center, visit:



[www.KirtlandTemple.org](http://www.KirtlandTemple.org)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### *D. Bruce Crockett*



Bruce Crockett is director of the Kirtland Spiritual Formation Center. He holds the priesthood office of evangelist. His past assignments include serving as president for the Community of Christ Heart of Michigan USA Mission Center, president for the Michigan Region, and

president for the Upper Ohio Valley Region. He was a music educator in northern California in addition to serving as spiritual growth commissioner, and minister of music for the religious program at Graceland College. Bruce received an associate of science in horticulture from Merritt College; a B.A. in Music Education from Graceland College; and a M.A. in Music Education from Holy Names College. Bruce has also completed training as a spiritual formation director from the Dominican Center at Marywood, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Bruce and his wife, Gloria, live in Kirtland, Ohio.

### *Barbara Walden*

Barbara Walden learned her first lessons in church history from a small Community of Christ congregation that gathered in a three-car garage in her hometown of Ridgecrest, California. Captured by the stories of Emma Smith and Oliver Cowdery in her youth, she pursued a B.A. in History from Graceland University and a M.A. in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, State University of New York at Oneonta. Following graduate school, Barbara returned to her passion for Community of Christ historic sites and served as the site director of the Kirtland Temple from 2002-2009. Today, she is the executive director of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation. Barbara and her husband, Jody, reside in Lexington, Kentucky.



