

THE FORUM

Bus Trip Blessings

Experience deepens Sullivans' faith. Page 8



Community of Christ
Historic Sites Foundation



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Volunteers Hit the Road

Elliotts Serve Multiple Sites

By Greg Clark

The hub of voluntarism for the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation may reside in Peoria, Illinois.

No, the foundation doesn't support any properties there. But it does benefit from two extraordinary volunteers who serve in three cities.

Myra and Fred Elliott's talents, generosity, dedication—and driving skills—are supporting the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois; the Kirtland Temple in Ohio; and the Plano Stone Church in Illinois.

"We'd be in desperate need without them," said Apostle Lach Mackay, who oversees the church's historic sites. "Fred and Myra's gifts, talents, passion, and most importantly, willingness to share their time in the service of others, are deeply appreciated."

Their efforts include upgrading research libraries in Nauvoo and Kirtland, improving historic homes in Nauvoo, and providing desperately

See Elliotts on page 9

Holy Land Beckons Special Pilgrimage

By Greg Clark

About 50 people soon will take some new steps on an old, old path.

The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation will lead Holy Land Tour 2019 in October. In addition, pre- and post-tour options will broaden the experience geographically, historically, and spiritually.

The highlights of the main tour will go back to the roots of Christianity, helping participants see places such as Nazareth, the Galilee, Jericho, Masada, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and more.

Along the way, the travelers will retrace many steps by Jesus Christ. Even more, they'll learn

See Holy Land on page 10



Christin Mackay, in her new role as director, has a special perspective of the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois. Story: page 2.

Christin Mackay takes Nauvoo's reins

By Greg Clark

OK, could anybody ever have doubted that Christin Mackay was the right person to fill the role as director of the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois?

Her education, experience, insights, and passion all made her selection a no-brainer. Sure, she receives notice as the wife of Lach Mackay, the former site director. But she didn't get the job because of her last name; she got it because she was the right person, with the right qualifications and right skills.

And because she accepted it, the church—and the historic site—are blessed.

In fact, you could argue that Christin seemed destined for the post. Consider:

*Education (she majored in history at Graceland University).

*Her family (her parents are site directors at Heritage Plaza in Independence, Missouri, and her brother is an attorney at International Headquarters in Independence).

*Her experience (she interned at the Kirtland Temple and in Nauvoo; she also volunteered at Liberty Hall in Lamon, Iowa).

*Her track record (she twice served as interim director).

* Her previous responsibilities (she was a retail specialist for stores at the Temple in Independence, Kirtland Temple, and the Red Brick Store in Nauvoo).

With that kind of pedigree, church history flows through her veins. Barb Walden, executive director of the Community of Christ Historic Site Foundation, is certainly supportive.

"I can think of no one with more experience working at the Community of Christ historic sites than Christin Mackay," Barb said. "She has served as a summer intern, researcher, presenter, museum store specialist, and interim site director. Her new role as site director of the Joseph Smith Historic Site will be her greatest role yet. I look forward to working with her long into the future."

For her part, Christin said: "I am definitely not Lach. He's wonderful, but we each do things in our own way. I definitely pick his brain all the time because he has the experience. We've also worked together for the last 11 years at the site."

In fact, the historic sites may have led to their marriage. Christin said she first met Lach at the Red Brick Store in 1994 while interning at Nauvoo. They reconnected later when she was interning at Kirtland. Appropriately, they later honeymooned at another historic site, Colonial Williamsburg.



She remembers her first reaction to Nauvoo as an intern. "Coming from Lamon, to another small town, I liked it. It was very peaceful, it was beautiful, the people were nice."

She mentioned the colorful autumn landscape. "The springs are really something, too. In the spring it's like a flower festival."

In 2006 she began working as an interim site director. The following year she was hired to the retail specialist post. It was a good fit.

"I enjoyed seeing all the different groups of people. It's exciting to find merchandise. We keep a pretty narrow focus with things they would have been selling originally. And, of course, there's the

root beer."

Meanwhile Lach was adapting to his new role as an apostle and leader of the Church History and Sacred Story Team. That meant Christin soon found herself once again serving as the interim site director. In May the "interim" tag was removed.

"I had been doing it in an interim capacity for nine or 10 months before that, so we decided to make it permanent since it was working out well."

Christin said she still is responsible for the stores, "but now I'm heavily involved with the maintenance projects. I have more interaction with the volunteers, students, and training, and I've started giving tours again. It's been a lot of fun. I was excited and up for the challenge."

More than ever she's involved in the broader Nauvoo community and with events at the historic site. She's acutely aware of the many needs.

"We definitely need volunteers," she said. "We're closed more than we'd like to be because we don't have enough. We do have housing available."

She said her time at the historic site has changed her.

"It probably has helped me be more understanding and compassionate. We have a lot of people coming through in some sort of faith crisis. It's been helpful to learn the history and talk about it in a way that might be healing or to provide information about the church that might be of interest."

For her own recreation, she enjoys hiking through the community and the river flats, sometimes covering up to five miles. But even then she can't escape thoughts of history.

"I spend time wondering about what Emma Smith must have been thinking."

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Some give to honor and preserve church heritage.

Some give because of spiritual experiences while visiting one of the sites.

Some give to provide opportunities for young people to learn and deepen their appreciation for church history.

Some give in honor or memory of loved ones, past and present.

No matter your reason for giving, we deeply appreciate your support. You can mail donations to P.O. Box 338, Nauvoo, IL 62354. You also can donate your gifts online at www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org.

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Snow covered the gravesite at the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois, with a peaceful blanket.

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The upper room of the Red Brick Store, site of so many important meetings and services in the early days of the church, was a recent gathering place for Historic Sites Foundation board members and guests.

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Liberty Hall in Lamoni, Iowa, received oodles of tender, loving care over the summer from several Graceland University students, including Nicole Snider. In addition the Community of Christ RV Association stopped and made significant improvements to the appearance of the historic home and its grounds.

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Get Ready for World Conference

History lovers will delight in the Community of Christ World Conference April 5-13 in Independence, Missouri.

A Storytellers event will run from 3:00-4:45 p.m., Saturday, April 6, in the Temple, which will mark the 25th anniversary of its dedication during the Conference.

In addition the foundation will run a booth at the Village Expo in the Lower Assembly Room of the Auditorium and sponsor two luncheons.

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 Art Smith (birthday)
 Keith McMillan (birthday)

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Robert and Sharon Clothier (Trust), Independence, MO

‘Reunion on Wheels’ Leaves Big Impression

By Greg Clark

“Zion Past and Present” was the official theme of the Community of Christ Historic Site Foundation’s fall bus tour. But board member Sally Roth said the travelers succinctly dubbed it “Reunion on Wheels.”

“We had a great bus tour. Truly zionic,” Roth said. “It was more than 50 people coming together as a very cohesive group.”

That experience wasn’t lost on Tim and Sharon Sullivan of Overland Park, Kansas. Originally they had no plans to go. But they ended up with free tickets when a friend had to cancel because of physical problems.

Tim and Sharon each started with concerns, but the atmosphere on the bus quickly resolved them. The result: “I think (the tour) gave me a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices others made to get our World Church to where it is now,” Tim said. “And it gave me more knowledge of the background of our church.”

Along the way, they experienced history through the Kirtland Temple in Ohio; the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois; the Plano Stone Church in Illinois; Liberty Hall in Lamoni, Iowa; and the Temple in Independence, Missouri.

Even more, they experienced the stories of several other attempts to create heaven on Earth. The October tour introduced the travelers to modern-day communities that are passionate about living the gospel through communal lifestyles. Examples included worship at a Benedictine monastery, a visit to a Bruderhof community in rural Pennsylvania, an eco-village in northern Missouri, a Shaker community in Kentucky, and Harmonists in Indiana.

Before leaving, Sharon had qualms about keeping up with others “because I’m kind of sedentary. But it worked out great. When we got out and walked the tour, they divided us up between those who were more athletic or casual. We didn’t miss anything.”

For Tim, pre-travel worries centered on fitting in because they didn’t know anyone else well.

He soon learned that folks came from near and far, places such as California, Utah, Missouri, Washington, and Florida. “It worked out fine,” he said. “When you worship with people, pray with people, and hear about their concerns, you grow together. There was a man with blood clot. We were praying with him. We got close to each other.”

He added that bus seats switched every day, enabling people to get to know each other.

Sharon especially enjoyed visiting the Bruderhof community. She said it has about 200 members. They turn over all assets to the community, which in turn cares for all the members’ needs.

For Tim, the best part of the trip was the Kirtland Temple. “I had this anticipation. I felt the Spirit the moment we



got there. We had a Communion service there. I’d heard people talk about it for years, and for me it measured up to the reputation.”

The trip’s impact continued to be felt after they returned home. They soon found themselves recounting their experiences as part of a Sunday school class. Also their congregation in Olathe, Kansas, was preparing for an evangelist blessing. “I felt like it prepared me for the blessing because I was so struck with the hospitality, the giving, and what our people went through,” Sharon explained. “That made the congregational blessing more meaningful.”

It also was meaningful for Barb Walden, executive director of the foundation and a veteran of many tours. “Halfway through the tour, Peter Smith and I were trying to figure out what it was that was different. At end of the tour a gentleman came up to me and said, ‘This was best vacation I’ve ever had. My mind, body, and spirit were rested and nurtured.’”

Barb also mentioned experiences while traveling: “People talked about living out values. What am I doing? What am I doing in my neighborhood? What am I doing as a disciple of Christ?”

“Later a woman shared about her past challenges with addiction. In sharing she was offering her ministry to anyone there who suffered from addictions or knew someone who suffered from addictions. That moment made this a successful bus tour. It gave me hope for our faith community as well as the foundation.”

Elliotts

Continued from page 1

needed maintenance to the Plano Stone Church.

All of that comes with sacrifice. The Elliotts, both in their early 70s, make multiple trips (27 to Nauvoo in 2018), often staying several days at a time. "We put roughly 10,000 miles a year on the car going back and forth," Fred said.

Myra credits her start in voluntarism a few years ago to former site worker Linda Etchison.

"We became good friends, and she knew I was working in a library. She knew the condition of the Nauvoo Library and how long it had been since someone took care of it. She invited me to come down and do it. And I just love that kind of work."

Soon Myra found herself in Nauvoo about two weeks a month.

Fred noticed.

"I started volunteering because my wife was abandoning me, going to Nauvoo and leaving me home," he joked. "She said why don't you come on down."

So he did, planning to help with site maintenance. They stayed right next to the historic site's Wright House. Myra commented that the house was in trouble. Fred looked it over and said, "I think we can fix this."

The first thing they needed to do was fix a sagging ceiling.

He joined other workers and volunteers in lifting the ceiling almost two inches, putting in supports and struts.

"That led us then to repairing the floors and taking loose plaster off the walls," Fred said. "We found some original woodwork. We ended up replastering the entire wall and put the original woodwork up again."

Myra said that's when their volunteer efforts "exploded into something much bigger. Now there are times when I actually help with restoration of the houses, working on designing the kitchens."

Meanwhile, her library work has expanded all the way to Kirtland, 562 miles from Peoria. "When they moved into the new Visitors Center, there was no organization with the books whatsoever," she said. "So it took three or four trips when I finally said, 'Now it's starting to look like a library.' That was a significant thing to me. Now I'm seeing order out of chaos."

Lach praised her work. "Her attention to detail is stunning, and her organizational skills are among the best I have ever encountered. Spending so much time in Nauvoo and Kirtland has gotten her interested in historical interpretation, and she is now training to give tours in Nauvoo."

Myra still has more work to do with the libraries, Fred is looking ahead to restoring another house, and he's preparing for some significant work in Plano, where squirrels caused a lot of damage.



Lach mentioned one of Fred's strongest attributes: "With a background in electrical engineering and following a career with Caterpillar...he is one of those rare individuals who will look at a problem and talk about all the ways it can be fixed, vs. focusing on all the reasons it can't be done."

When asked why they volunteer, Fred admitted that he likes the challenge of figuring out how to do something. Myra added: "I come because I want to help. The number of hours is not important to me."

She added that in their retirement volunteering "keeps us active, more alive, more involved. Everybody has skills that are needed in some way for the benefit of others. It's good for your emotional, spiritual, mental health."

And volunteers definitely are needed.

"Historic sites have always counted on volunteers to operate," Lach said, "and with the current financial pressures, we depend on them like never before. We are profoundly grateful for the Elliotts and for all those who donate their time...to help us share the sacred story with those seeking to learn more."

Make a Donation, Aid Preservation

Preserving and sharing church heritage and telling the sacred story of our journey is a privilege and a responsibility.

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

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

You also can donate at www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org.

Volunteers Needed

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

Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation

P.O. Box 338
Nauvoo, IL 62354

Holy Land

Continued from page 1

Tour Details

Main Tour: October 22–31, 2019, \$3,998 per person, double occupancy with air fare from New York.

Pre-tour: October 20–23, \$998 plus \$138 visa, tips, and taxes.

Post-tour: October 30–November 4, \$1,098 plus \$138 visa, tips, and taxes.

Highlights: Jerusalem, numerous biblical sites, the Dead Sea, and much more.

Contact: For more information, contact Barb Walden at bwalden@historicsitesfoundation.org.

much of the Community of Christ legacy in the Holy Land. They'll also experience the opportunity to delve into a deeper spirituality by connecting the stories of the Bible with tales of Community of Christ missionaries.

They'll learn of church members' efforts, dating from the 1840s, to start a school, cope with cultural differences, and perform baptisms in the Jordan River.

They'll also review the legacy of blueberry farmers, passionate about establishing Zion, who sailed from Maine in the 1860s on a mission to reunite the tribes of Israel. Though their efforts failed, some remained and helped start a tourism market that still thrives today.

"Though many disciples know a lot about the role of Jesus in the Holy Land, far fewer are familiar with our church's history roots there," said Barbara Walden, executive director of the founda-



tion.

In short, participants will receive a special opportunity to extend their understanding of Biblical history and put it into the context of life in their church today. Along the way they're also likely to pick up insights

about the tensions and blessings of the area in today's world.

A highlight will be time spent in Jerusalem. "We will spend a couple of days...discovering the sites, sounds, and foods of the Old City," Walden said.

The pre- and post-tour options will make the trip even more enticing.

"In addition to the nine-day tour of the Holy Land," Walden said, "we will offer a pre-tour excursion to Jordan and Petra that includes a night at the Dead Sea. We will also offer a post-tour excursion that's a five day tour of Egypt. It will include seeing the pyramids and a cruise on the Nile. How exciting is that!"