



THE STORYTELLER

Go Ye Into All the World ~ Mark 16:15

Discover a history that stretches across the world in Community of Christ. Within our global family we find powerful stories from the past that inspire and speak to us today.



Kirtland Temple

Missionary zeal is a continuous theme throughout the Community of Christ story. It was while sitting in a Kirtland Temple pulpit in 1837 that Apostle Heber C. Kimball received the first mission call to carry the gospel overseas, and soon thousands were being baptized in the United Kingdom. It was from this same pulpit that Evangelist Roy Cheville commissioned Apostles Blair Jensen and Charles Neff to extend the invitation to Christ to the people of Asia in 1959.



NUNEATON, ENGLAND

JOHN COGGAN SR. AND THE NUNEATON CONGREGATION

At a time when fear and resentment towards Germans ran high, the members of the Nuneaton Congregation were expressing a remarkable sense of love towards England's former enemies. While World War II was drawing to a close, John Coggan Sr., pastor of the Nuneaton Congregation, was driving in his car when he noticed two German prisoners of war walking along the side of the road. John pulled over and invited the two men, Bruno Natzet and George Strobel, to come to his home. After receiving permission from the prison camp commander, the two men followed through with the home visit and a friendship between the prisoners and the pastor began.

Not long after their first meal together at the Coggan home, Bruno and George were invited to church with the family. Permission to share in worship and fellowship with the local congregation was granted. The same warm hospitality they received at the Coggan home was extended to the men by the congregation. After a while, Bruno and George invited a third prisoner, Walter Lobitz, to join them at the Nuneaton Congregation. Walter was a gifted musician who played in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. While Walter played the piano and cello, George was a violinist. The two prisoners would share their musical gifts, often accompanied by the pastor's daughter, Joan, on the cello and violin. The ministry of music shared among those whose countries were once at war was a powerful statement about a future of hope and peace. The courageous faith and friendship once extended on the side of the road continued long after Bruno, George, and Walter returned home to their native countries. The story of the Nuneaton Congregation is a powerful example of a faith community following Christ's commandment to "love your enemies."

Congregational leaders at an annual harvest event at the Nuneaton Congregation. John Coggan Sr. is featured on the far left.





Communion in India



Alicia and Elkana Odupa



Baptism in Australia

KENYA, AFRICA

ELKANA AND ALICIA ODUPA

Elkana Odupa learned about the Community of Christ while sitting in Wycliffe Ochieng's home in Nairobi, Kenya. Little did he know the lasting impact this visit to a friend's home would have on his family for years to come. Elkana's profession moved his family to a variety of posts until it landed in Turkana-Lodwar in 1985. While settling into his new community, he felt the Spirit encouraging him to take an active role in helping alleviate the suffering among the Turkana people. While driving with a colleague a few miles outside of Lodwar, Elkana noticed people fleeing as their vehicle approached the village. Elkana described his experience:

...men and women ran away from us, scattering in different directions at an amazing speed. I asked what was happening and why they were running away. The chief told me they thought we were plainclothes policemen who were there to arrest them. When I asked further as to why they should be arrested... he explained to me that all the changaa consumers from town go to the suburbs to brew and drink, far away from the authorities. The brewers live on proceeds from the sale of the drink. Changaa is deadly to empty stomachs, and the Turkana usually have little to eat. Many die of starvation or alcohol poisoning.

The Odupa's new community was on the brink of economic and social collapse. Consumption of alcohol had become epidemic, and the whole population was desperate. Alicia and Elkana felt a strong urge to begin working with the Turkana people of Nakwamekwi to help alleviate the suffering among those addicted to alcohol (changaa) and the desperation felt among their family members.

The Odupas saw that the Turkana people needed new avenues of income not dependent on the changaa industry. They began working with the people of the village in training them to weave baskets, trays, and mats. The new marketable skills and sales helped transform lives and the local economy. The Odupas watched as the people of the village took on new vocations that helped rescue their families from poverty, disease, and despair.

In addition to sharing new trades, the Odupas also introduced the Turkana people of Nakwamekwi to the gospel of Christ. People were baptized and a faith community formed. The Odupas witnessed healing, reconciliation, and redemption take place among those who were once struggling with addiction.

What drove Elkana and Alicia to dedicate their lives to helping the people of Turkana against all odds? Elkana said he felt God speaking to him through the message of Mark 2:14-15:

It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Elkana and Alicia Odupa received the Community of Christ International Humanitarian Award in 2004.

OKINAWA, JAPAN

KISUKE AND SAKU SEKINE

Apostle Kisuke Sekine and his wife, Saku, ran a school called "Zion's Kindergarten." Reflecting back on forty years of working with the children of Okinawa, Sekine said:

"Children are the future - the foundation for tomorrow... It is important business teaching them to live for others."



Church members in Tahiti



Sekine family from Japan



Reunion tent in England



Congregation in Peru



Baptism in ice water



Traveling missionaries

“God is calling for a prophetic community to emerge, drawn from the nations of the world, that is characterized by uncommon devotion to the compassion and peace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Through divine grace and wisdom, this faith community has been given abundant gifts, resources, and opportunities to equip it to become such a people.”

~ Doctrine and Covenants 163:11a

THE HOLY LAND

MISSIONARIES IN PALESTINE

Our faith community’s journey to Palestine began in February 1841 when Orson Hyde and George Adams sailed from the harbors of New York for the Holy Land. Only Orson was able to complete the mission. Over the decades that followed, more missionaries travelled to Palestine. Early church members helped establish a tourism industry for pilgrims interested in learning the history and historic sites located in and around Jerusalem. Rolla and Mary Jane Floyd opened their home to the church in both Jaffa and Jerusalem; Mary Jane also helped manage one of the first cinemas in Jerusalem.

In addition to the Floyd family, missionary couples like Rees and Hannah Jenkins, F. G. and Rosa Pitt, and Arthur and Edna Koehler helped establish the church's footprint in the area. A Saints’ Home/Mission House and School was established, language and art classes offered, along with Sunday worship and devotions. The historic context did not go unnoticed as they shared the gospel throughout the Holy Land. A highlight for F. G. Pitt was baptizing in the historic Jordan River, for example. Although interest in the Holy Land has continued throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the church property owned in Jerusalem was sold in the 1930s.



CHURCH PRESIDENT TRAVELS ABROAD

The Revolutionary War created prejudicial sentiments that lasted for generations among those in the U.S.A. Joseph Smith III recognized this weakness within himself as he traveled to England in 1901. The personal relationships made on the trip and hospitality experienced among the British people helped Joseph overcome his antagonism. The international trip also helped him see a global faith community from a new perspective. Under his leadership, missionaries traveled great distances to share the gospel in places like Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, Tahiti, Australia, Canada, Palestine, and the British Isles.



Church members in Germany



Missionaries in Jerusalem



Church leaders surveying the globe

FROM:

Community of Christ
Historic Sites Foundation
P. O. Box 338
Nauvoo, IL 62354

Preserving the Past, Inspiring the Future

The story of the church in Tahiti began when the first missionaries to French Polynesia were sent out from the Red Brick Store in 1843. Over the years, groups of visitors from Tahiti have returned to the store to celebrate their history. Their story, along with the stories of other countries within the Community of Christ's global family, continue to be shared and celebrated at Community of Christ historic sites.

The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation is dedicated to preserving and sharing church heritage with present and future generations. In addition to sharing stories from our global family heritage, the foundation raises funds for historic site preservation and maintenance, advocates for the historic sites, develops educational resources, funds young-adult internships, and helps promote appreciation for Community of Christ heritage. To learn more about how you can help preserve and share church heritage, visit our website:

www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org



Emile, a site guide from French Polynesia, stands outside the Red Brick Store, the location where the first missionaries were sent to French Polynesia in 1843.