



Community of Christ
Historic Sites Foundation



TUESDAY TALES IN CHURCH HISTORY



All photos courtesy of Community of Christ Library - Archives

WE ARE ALL STORYTELLERS

Throughout Community of Christ history you will find storytellers. Old friends surrounding the campfire at reunion grounds telling tales into the late hours, vulnerable members sharing painful experiences with those gathered at a prayer meeting, a member of the congregation lending a story to support a call to the priesthood. Whatever the setting may be, Community of Christ is blessed with powerful lessons from the past and passionate storytellers who preserve and share those rich stories.

In September 2018, the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation launched a social media program entitled, “Tuesday Tales in Church History.” Every Tuesday, a story from church history was introduced over Facebook, and a dialogue began among friends. This booklet includes a collection of stories that were posted online. We encourage you to dive deeper into the stories and explore the powerful

lessons behind each example from church history. Consider the message for today’s Community of Christ and for you as an individual, perhaps hearing the story for the first time.



“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.”

~ Doctrine and Covenants, 162

The guidance given in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 162, reveals to us that each individual’s journey is embedded with lessons. We must remember that our personal history is church history. Your story is an important piece of church heritage! As such, it is crucial that we continue the Community of Christ tradition of sharing stories that include lessons of sacrifice, tales of commitment and dedication, and at times painful stories of injustice and discrimination. Such stories have the power to change our lives.

The study of history shows us what we can become just as much as it reveals where we have been as individuals and as a faith community. Let’s discover our past together as we share and preserve the sacred stories with present and future generations.

EMMA BURTON, ALICE CASE, AND THE EVANELIA

In 1894, Emma Burton and Alice Case sailed from the San Francisco harbor on a newly christened schooner called the *Evanelia*. The two women were headed westward toward the beautiful islands of French Polynesia. They accompanied their husbands, Joseph Burton (also captain of the ship) and Hubert Case, both missionaries assigned to the islands. Unfortunately, Alice suffered from seasickness the entire trip. When they arrived in Tahiti and finally stood on land Alice said, “I thought that the land would stay still, but it seems to be moving, just as the ocean kept doing.”

Once on land, Alice and Emma devoted themselves to missionary service and education. Alice led church school programs, taught women’s groups, led women’s prayer circles, and served as district conference secretary. Emma was equally active during her time on the islands. She helped publish a thousand copies of the Doctrine and Covenants in the Tahitian language, helped publish *Te Orametua* (a Tahitian periodical), translated mimeographed church school lessons, and worked with the women and children living on the islands.

While in Tahiti, Emma sent a letter to President F.M. Smith sharing that she was witnessing spiritual and physical healing through the gift of prayer and laying on of hands by women. Although women were not involved in the formal leadership of the church on the islands, females were encouraged to take a spiritual role in their families and at the community level. Emma grew very comfortable in this environment and often led “The Sisters’ Prayer Meetings.”

The *Evanelia* served the missionaries well for two years before it sank in the South Pacific Ocean.



The Evanelia (featured in above) carried missionaries from island to island from 1894-1896.



Gathering of women from French Polynesia visiting with Alice Case (far right).

WHITNEY FAMILY'S FEAST FOR THE POOR

Early church members knew what it was like to be poor. Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister who lived in 1830s Kirtland, Ohio, said of his community: "Many of them live in extreme indigence... A grotesque assemblage of hovels and shanties and small houses have been thrown up wherever they could find a footing, but very few of all these cabins would be accounted fit for human habitation."

Among the wealthier members during this time were Newel and Elizabeth Ann Whitney. They owned a store, orchards, ashery, and two homes. Church members often depended on the Whitney family for housing, food, and employment.

In December 1831, Newel was called to the office of bishop. After accepting the call, Newel and Elizabeth committed themselves to helping those in need. Newel was instructed by revelation to travel among all the churches searching after the poor to administer to their wants by humbling the rich and proud. One solution to feeding the poor was "fast meetings" where individual members abstained from meals and brought butter, bread, and other food to the bishop's storehouse for distribution to the poor. The fast meetings occurred about the same time as the "feasts for the poor," open meals for those in need, such as widows, orphans, and the homeless.

Newel and Elizabeth Ann hosted an enormous feast for the poor at their home in 1835. The meal was so large the

guests were served in shifts over a three-day period. Years later, Elizabeth reflected on her ministry to the poor:

"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 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 in 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..."

The Whitneys were model examples of Christ's mission of compassion.



The Whitney Store located in Kirtland, Ohio (right). Joseph Smith III was born in an upper room of the Whitney Store in November 1832.



Sacred Grove at Palmyra, New York

The earth, lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation's natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.

Let the educational and community development endeavors of the church equip people of all ages to carry the ethics of Christ's peace into all arenas of life. Prepare new generations of disciples to bring fresh vision to bear on the perplexing problems of poverty, disease, war, and environmental deterioration. Their contributions will be multiplied if their hearts are focused on God's will for creation.

~ Doctrine and Covenants, Section 163:4b-c

EXPERIENCING GOD IN NATURE

Generations of church members have been drawn to the natural environment when searching for answers to life's most difficult questions. The founder of our church, Joseph Smith Jr. retired to a grove behind his boyhood home at a time when he was wrestling with questions about his personal salvation.

At a young age, Emma Smith also went to a forested area near her home to pray for her father, Isaac Hale. Emma was worried about his relationship with God. While she prayed, Isaac happened to be walking through the woods nearby and overheard Emma's heartfelt prayer on his behalf. He was so touched by his daughter's compassion and concern that he later joined his family's Methodist faith.

In 1851, Jason Briggs, an early leader in the Reorganization, wandered to a prairie near his farm in Beloit, Wisconsin, at a time he desperately needed God's guidance. This quiet moment of prayer changed Jason Briggs' life and impacted generations of church members.

Joseph, Emma, and Jason each had an experience with God while on their knees in prayer and surrounded by the beauty of creation. In the same way, church members today seek guidance and understanding by finding a quiet place surrounded by nature at church campgrounds and reunions around the world. In nature we find the peace of Christ.

STEALING APPLES IN NAUVOO



The Mansion House in Nauvoo

Peter Schenk arrived in Nauvoo as a curious boy in 1848. The young German immigrant resided in the small river town for more than fifty years and was considered one of the more influential and highly respected citizens of Nauvoo. When the local newspaper, *The Independent*, prepared to celebrate its 50th anniversary, Peter wrote a letter to the editor. Of all the memories and experiences shared during his time in Illinois, he chose to share a story from his childhood that involved an interaction with Joseph Smith III that left a lasting impression.

One day, while walking home from school with his friends, Peter noticed some delicious-looking apples on the

ground in the Smith family yard. The boys sneaked to the trees and began filling their arms and pockets with apples. Just as they prepared to leave, they were surprised to see Joseph Smith III walking toward them. Knowing he was caught red-handed, Peter quickly emptied his pockets and dropped all of the apples in his arms, except for the one he was eating. Even more surprising than Joseph Smith III's sudden appearance was his response. He said to the young apple thieves, "Those apples are no good, throw them away, and come back to the house with me, and I'll give you some good ones." Peter and his friends followed Joseph into the house where they found

Joseph's mother, Emma, and received several very good apples. The boys then continued on their journey home "feeling mighty happy at being left off so easy." Peter Schenk and his friends experienced "grace and generosity" at the Smith house that day.



Joseph Smith III (right)

ZION'S CAMP AND THE MARCH TO MISSOURI

*The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace.
It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit...
And it shall be a place in which the essential
meaning of the Restoration as healing and redeeming
agent is given new life and understanding, inspired by
the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world.*

~Doctrine and Covenants, Section 156:5a, e

Community of Christ history is a story of a prophetic people. Early church members felt the divine influence close at hand and were open to hearing God's guidance in the form of revelations. Early revelations encouraged members to make sacrifices. At other times, revelations caused them to reverse direction and listen more closely to God's will.

Such was the case at Fishing River, Missouri, on June 22, 1834. A militant group of 200+ church members called "Zion's Camp" had marched to Jackson County, seeking to recover property unjustly taken from church members who were forced from their homes. Some members wanted revenge on the Missourians who mistreated their friends and family. Others were armed and seeking justice. Legal negotiations had failed, and it appeared the only option was armed conflict. As Zion's Camp arrived outside Independence on June 22, Joseph Smith Jr. prayed for guidance. A revelation was given that told those gathered at

Fishing River to "... Sue for peace, not only the people that have smitten you, but also to all people; and lift up an ensign of peace, and make a proclamation for peace unto the ends of the earth; and make proposals for peace, unto those who have smitten you...according to the voice of the Spirit which is in you...therefore, be faithful, and, behold, and lo, I am with you even unto the end..." (later recorded as Doctrine and Covenants 102:11). This revelation was counter to the feelings of aggression and anger shared among the members of Zion's Camp. The message called members to lay down their arms and pursue peace. The story of Zion's Camp teaches us that belief in Continuing Revelation is a commitment to listen to God's message, no matter the circumstances.



*President Wallace B. Smith
(above) breaking ground on
the Temple in Independence.*



EMBRACING HONESTY IN KIRTLAND

A few months before the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Sidney Rigdon presided over a small worship service in a schoolhouse behind the Temple. Economic, social, religious, and political tensions were being felt among church members, and not everyone was able to see “eye to eye.” Before the worship service, Rigdon recognized 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. Rather than continue with the service he had planned, Sidney invited the members of the First Presidency and 12 apostles to come before the congregation and confess their sins one to another. One wrote about the worship experience in his journal that those in the congregation “were soon overwhelmed in tears and some of our hearts were too big for utterances.”

Sidney Rigdon’s worship service in Kirtland and his willingness to be led by the Spirit in worship remind us of how we often experience the presence of God in fellowship with others. His experience also teaches us that repentance, humility, and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable with one another are among the many blessings of community experienced in Community of Christ.

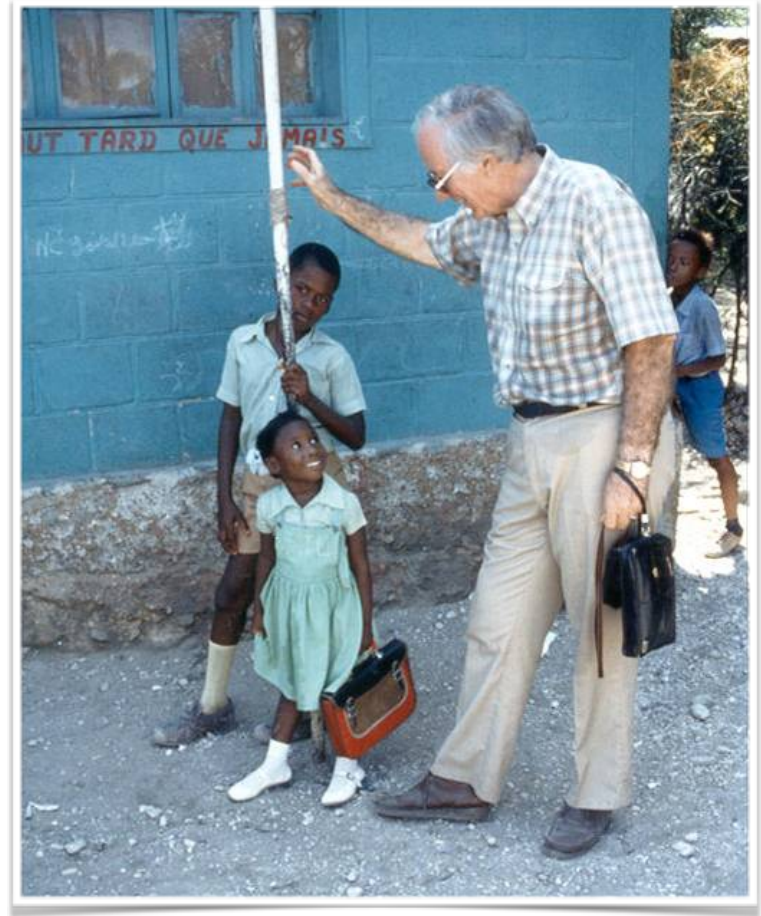
CHARLES NEFF ENCOUNTERS CHRIST IN INDIA

*“I believe that was the Lord Jesus coming to me in my time of need.”
~Apostle Charles Neff*

When Charles Neff arrived in India in 1966, he had no idea his life was about to be changed. After arriving in Berhampur, Neff and his fellow church members from India packed up supplies and traveled 45 miles by bus into the jungle. They then walked 14 miles through foothills, dense undergrowth, and small streams on a narrow rocky path, to the village of Antarba. Unfortunately, Neff made the mistake of wearing a new pair of shoes. By the end of the journey his feet were so badly blistered he could hardly walk. When he arrived at the village, he sat down and slowly removed his shoes. A crowd soon gathered around him, looking at his injured feet. One woman observed his pain, walked away, and returned with a bowl of water. She then broke several cultural taboos as she knelt before Neff and carefully washed his aching feet.

This woman’s act of helping a stranger in need was a bold move in her native country. During this time in India it was inappropriate for a woman to touch, or be touched, by another man outside her family. Her act of kindness was not a small gesture, but rather a risk that could have resulted in the woman being ostracized from her community.

Neff knew the risks this woman was taking as she gently washed and massaged his swollen feet. It was among the finest examples of Christian witness he had ever experienced. He later said of the woman, “I believe that was the Lord Jesus coming to me in my time of need.” In that moment, Neff was experiencing what it meant to be a person of worth in the eyes of a stranger.



Charles Neff (above) traveled all over the world on behalf of Community of Christ and Outreach International.

MISSIONARIES IN THE HOLY LAND



Early missionary performing a baptism in the Jordan River (above left); Missionary couples enjoying a picnic at the Jordan River (above right)

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 traveled to Palestine. Early church members helped establish a tourism industry for pilgrims interested in learning about 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 Kohlman helped establish the church 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.

CASSIE KELLEY AND THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE



Historic image of the Kirtland Temple.

Catherine “Cassie” Kelley and her family moved to Kirtland, Ohio, in the early 1880s. Her husband, E.L. Kelley, was assigned the project of restoring the Kirtland Temple back to its original splendor. It was an enormous task that required not only his time, but the time of his wife and his brother, Apostle William Kelley. While William and E.L. were traveling the U.S. raising funds for the restoration and preservation of the Kirtland Temple, Cassie was often left to supervise the workers, lead tours, host visitors, and work in the small bookstore, all in addition to raising her children and helping to manage a hotel. With her husband’s absence for long periods of time, Cassie was thrust into a new role where she often made financial, social, community, and ministerial decisions alone. The letters between Cassie, E.L., and William Kelley were preserved by their descendants and are now housed in the Community of Christ archives.

A particular story reflecting Cassie's leadership during her decade in Kirtland happened one evening after a long day of restoration work on the temple. That evening the roof of the temple caught fire from the tinner's kit being used to tin the belfry. Fortunately, the fire was quickly discovered by Cassie and a fellow church member, C. Scott. Cassie Kelley and C. Scott energized and assembled a bucket brigade to extinguish the fire. The event was later reported in

the Herald, “..the timely discovery, and the energy and assistance of Bro. C. Scott and Sr. E.L. Kelley, the old building would have been burned.” Cassie later wrote to her husband, “Five minutes later and the whole thing would have had to go... No damage was done to the building to the amount to anything as it was... I drew water and the rest carried.”

Cassie Kelley and her bucket brigade saved the Kirtland Temple that day.



Image of Cassie Kelley (above) taken later in life.

WOMEN OF THE SANDWICH CONGREGATION

Minnie Blair Nicholson, daughter of Elizabeth and W.W. Blair, shares this story about how the women in the Sandwich community supported her mother during a difficult time while Minnie's father was away on a mission. Minnie's mother, Elizabeth, was pregnant and chose not to tell Minnie's father that she was expecting a child as she feared it would prevent him from serving in his missionary responsibilities. Minnie tells the story:

“Had it not been for the kind and efficient help of a member of the Sandwich Branch in planning and looking after the finishing up on the home so the family could be moved in before winter, it would indeed have been a serious time for us. About the time we moved to Sandwich, Charlie, the oldest of the family, had a low fever; and all the younger children had the whooping cough. The youngest boy, David, about three years old, had it so seriously that it seemed that we would have to give him up.

Then the new baby, Frederick, was born.



Marietta Walker and her daughter, Lucy (shown above), attended the Sandwich, Illinois, branch along with Marietta's mother and sister.

Had it not been for the loving care of Sisters Eliza Cox and Emmeline Banta, we would have been in a deplorable condition. But day by day one or the other would come to care for Mother and wash the baby. It was Sister Marietta Faulconer (now Walker) who wrote to tell Father of the arrival of the new boy.

Just about that time, Brother Fred Hartshorn happened to pass our house and saw me, then a girl of 13, struggling with a big washing out in the unfinished part of the house. He did not stop, but hurried home; and soon his sister, Clara, was there helping me.

It was thus that the Saints assisted in the life of the family of the early missionary. Such was the life of those who were struggling to raise a family on very limited income.”

Minnie's story about the women of the Sandwich Congregation supporting her family in their time of need is an example of compassionate ministry and building community.

VIDA SMITH AND THE OLD PATH

Two women significantly involved in early hymn writing were Mary Audentia Smith Anderson and Vida E. Smith. Cousins by birth, but friends by choice, Audentia and Vida partnered to create one of our faith community's most beloved hymns, "There's an Old, Old Path." The hymn was written by Vida while listening to a sermon at her home congregation in Lamoni, Iowa. She tells the story:

"I seated myself in the usual place on the north side of the church. A slight breeze moved the branches of the trees near the window; birds flitted about and called or sat on some swaying branch, singing in the Sabbath softness; the choir sang and someone prayed — all as usual. The minister read his text, that old favorite... about finding the old paths and walking therein. He soon faded from my realization as my eyes rested on the swaying branches of the trees and the soft clouds against the blue sky, and I felt the nearness of congenial friends. I felt at home in the house of God, and I felt at ease before his mercy seat. The glory of the message of the ancient prophet flooded my soul and, opening my quarterly, I wrote on the flyleaf the words of the song exactly as they appear in the hymnal."

Vida shared her new hymn with Mary Audentia, a skilled musician. Audentia soon wrote a beautiful hymn to accompany Vida's thoughts and experience while sitting in her home congregation.

Vida's hymn was soon published in the new church hymnal, "Zion's Praises" and quickly became a favorite among church members. For many, singing "There's an Old, Old Path" in the large assembly room of the Auditorium is a highlight of the World Conference experience.



Vida E. Smith (above) was not only a gifted hymn writer, she also authored a few history books including a biography of her father, Alexander Hale Smith.

AN APOSTLE WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR



John Garver is featured above on the far right. The photo was taken off the coast of Maine while he traveled with family and friends.

Apostle John Garver was not only known for his leadership as a counselor for church Presidents Frederick M. Smith and Israel Smith, he was also known for his sense of humor. His friend, Roy Cheville, shared a memorable story about Apostle Garver's cleverness during a spectacular weather interruption that occurred while Garver preached at a church reunion:

“One evening during a Lamoni reunion the weather became quite stormy. As John preached the rumblings of the thunder and snaps of the lightning became more and more distracting. Finally he shook his fist at the sky and said, ‘Rumble if you want! I can talk loud enough to be heard above you!’ Immediately the thunder roared so that not a word could be heard. In the moment that followed the apostle looked up and said, ‘I’ll take you on some other night. You win the game tonight.’ He offered a few sentences of benediction, and the meeting was over. Both he and the congregation left smiling.”

PURSUE PEACE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD



Perce Judd (appears in the image above on the right) worked for the United Nations for over 30 years.

As a young boy, Perce Judd looked forward to the weekly church gatherings at Sister Cole's home. His pastor, Edwin Davies, would roll out a large map of Palestine and share stories from the scriptures. Perce was fascinated by the wars, captures, and prophecies, but what he remembered most was the passion of his pastor as he shouted,

“And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Decades later, Perce would discover these words written on the United Nations building in New York City.

Raised in southern Australia, Perce traveled the world promoting peace among nations most of his life. He was in London in 1946 when the UN General Assembly met for the first time. He was invited to serve on the newly formed UN Secretariat. Over the next three decades, he traveled the world on behalf of the United Nations, working for better trade practices, equitable sharing of resources, and the pursuit of justice for the poor and developing countries. World leaders hailed him for his perseverance, honesty, integrity, and skillful “diplomacy of quiet negotiation.”

He later reflected on his unique heritage and calling:

“A sister who made a brief statement at the time when I was called to the office of teacher in the church stressed the importance of ‘peacemakers.’ This thought became a basis for my life, and particularly later when I joined the UN. I deem it a great privilege to have worked so long for the UN as well as for a church whose very symbol and motto is ‘peace’ which stresses the need to spread the message of Christ, namely Peace on Earth.”

LOVING YOUR ENEMIES IN ENGLAND

At a time when fear and resentment toward Germans ran high, the members of the Nuneaton Congregation expressed a remarkable sense of love toward 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 country. The story of the Nuneaton Congregation is a powerful example of a faith community following Christ's commandment to "love your enemies."



The gentlemen featured in the Nuneaton Congregation's fall Harvest image above include (left to right): John Coggan Sr., the Nuneaton pastor; John Worth of Enfield; and Arthur Munslow of Birmingham.

NAUVOO'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

In 1857, Joseph Smith III was elected Nauvoo Township justice of the peace. In this role, Joseph interacted with many German immigrants who then called Nauvoo home. Joseph grew increasingly concerned that Nauvoo's earlier settlers were taking advantage of his German neighbors. He commented in his memoirs:

"I drew their [the immigrants'] deeds, their mortgages, their contracts, and when they were brought before me in civil suits I managed in many instances to secure settlement out of court whereby they were saved much trouble and expense. For all these services I had freely lowered the costs and fees when any were too poor to pay or could ill afford to, and in many cases made no charge at all... It did not suit me to see industrious citizens oppressed because of their lack of familiarity with our language or customs."

Joseph Smith III built community through compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed. However, significant misunderstandings developed in the area after he became church president in 1860. Some remembered the violent conflicts in Nauvoo during the 1840s and worried history would repeat itself. They publicly opposed Joseph's involvement in the church and as a result, also opposed his bid for re-election as justice of the peace. He won the election, despite the opposition. Joseph attributed his victory to the immigrants in the community. They voted for him as a way of expressing their thanks for the kindness he had shown over the years. Together Joseph Smith III and the German community in Nauvoo modeled the Enduring Principle of Unity in Diversity.

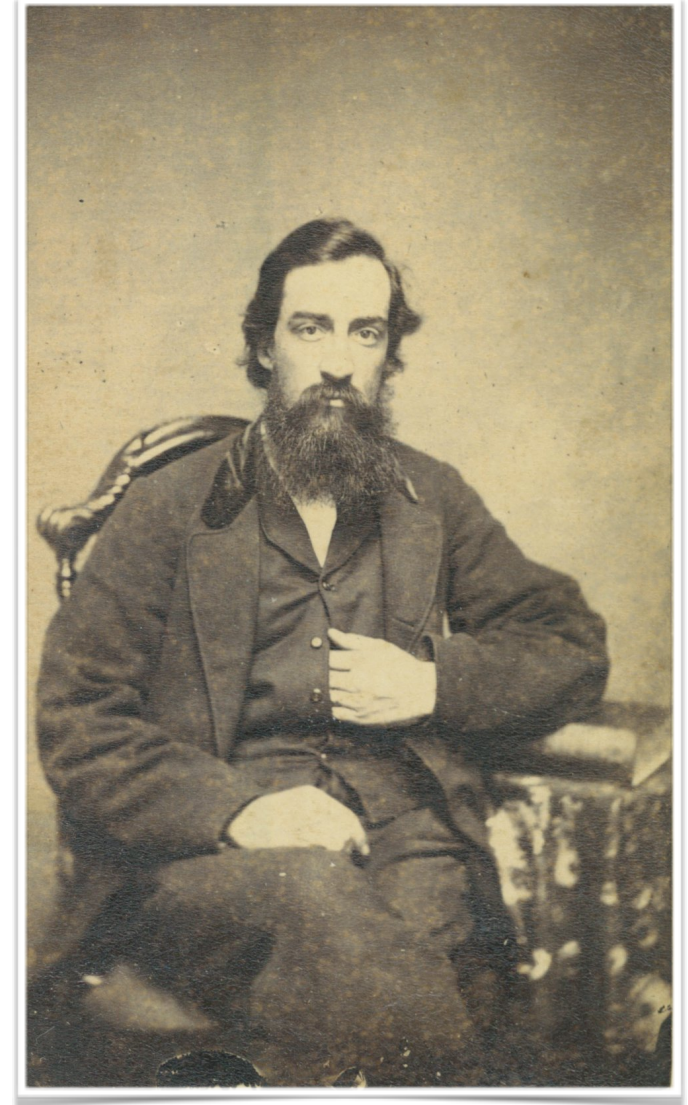


Image of Joseph Smith III

REUNIONS AT THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE

This story takes us back to the 1920s when the Kirtland Temple was continuing to be used as a place of worship by the local congregation and a gathering place for summer reunions for church members traveling from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and western New York. Apostle Gomer Griffiths, a longtime Kirtland resident and temple guide from the 1880s throughout the 1940s (featured in the photo below), reminisced about a particularly memorable experience during this time. His story appeared in an 1935 *Saints Herald*. Gomer shared:

“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 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 an 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 Griffiths enjoyed his remaining years in Kirtland serving as a temple guide, caretaker, and minister at the local congregation. He is buried in the historic cemetery next to the Kirtland Temple.

Annual reunions, like the one shown on the right, were held on the Kirtland Temple grounds for decades. Worship services were held in the Lower Court, while the Upper Court and attic space hosted classes for all ages. For many of the youth in attendance, a climb to the bell tower was a highlight of the Kirtland reunion.

Gomer Griffiths (left) served an influential role in obtaining and installing a bell in the Kirtland Temple bell tower. The bell was installed in 1890 and is still rung every Sunday morning.



COMPASSION IN KENYA

Elkana Odupa's profession moved his family to a variety of posts until they landed in Turkana-Lodwar in 1985. While settling into his new community, Elkana 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 saw that the Turkana people needed new avenues of income not dependent on the alcohol (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 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

For more information about preserving and sharing Community of Christ heritage, go to:
www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org

