



Community of Christ

Historic Sites Foundation

Invite People to Christ

Community of Christ Heritage Day

Sunday, September 20, 2015

Prelude and Gathering

Congregational Life (Announcements)

Prayer for Peace

You may use either the Prayer for Peace materials as posted on the Community of Christ website (www.CofChrist.org/prayerpeace) or adapt the prayer to reflect this special Heritage Day service.

Welcome and Call to Worship

While welcoming the congregation, the worship leader should introduce the annual Heritage Day service and the "Invite People to Christ" theme.

Scripture Reading: *Doctrine and Covenants* 162:3b and 163:2b

"That Spirit is even now touching alive the souls of those who feel the passion of discipleship burning deeply within. Many others will respond if you are persistent in your witness and diligent in your mission to the world. . . . Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith."

Introduction to the Opening Hymn

At times early missionaries used music to Invite People to Christ. Shortly after his ordination as priest in 1835, Wilford Woodruff and his missionary partner headed for the swamps and forests of the South on their first trip. Before arriving at the Illinois border, Woodruff's partner left him in an alligator swamp and returned home. Despite his partner's abandonment, the young missionary continued to Memphis, Tennessee, soon arriving at a tavern. After chastising the young preacher for some time, the bartender agreed to let Woodruff preach. He placed him in a corner with a stand that held a Bible, hymnbook, and a candle. Woodruff said nearly 500 people gathered around him, "not to hear a good sermon, but to have fun." In an attempt to warm up the crowd, Woodruff invited his guests to sing a hymn. He wrote:

"I read a hymn, and asked them to sing. Not a soul would sing a word. I told them I had not the gift of singing, but with the help of the Lord I would pray and preach. I arose and spoke one hour and a half and it was one of the best sermons of my life."

Let us join in an opening hymn by Parley P. Pratt, one of the first missionaries in the church.

***Hymn: CCS 493: “O God in Heaven, We Believe”**

***Invocation**

***Response**

Invite People to Christ

The section below includes four stories from Community of Christ heritage that reflect our faith community’s call to Invite People to Christ. Consider having four individuals share one story each. For comfortable pacing between readings, sing a verse of “When We Lift Our Pack and Go,” CCS 634, between each story.

Reader One

Parley P. Pratt was among four missionaries sent from western New York to the Missouri frontier in 1830. It was an 800-mile journey! Preparing for the mission involved the entire community, including women. According to Lucy Mack Smith:

“Emma Smith, and several other sisters, began to make arrangements to furnish those who were set apart for this mission with the necessary clothing which was no easy task, as the most of it had to be manufactured out of the raw material.”

Lucy’s daughter-in-law, Emma, was pregnant with twins and worked so hard helping the missionaries get ready that she “brought upon herself a heavy fit of sickness” and virtually was bedfast four weeks.

CCS 634: “When We Lift Our Pack and Go” (verse 1)

Reader Two

In 1843, four missionaries left Nauvoo, Illinois, for the South Pacific. As Noah Rogers, Addison Pratt, Benjamin Grouard, and Knowlton Hanks sailed across the ocean, Knowlton grew increasingly ill. He passed away in the arms of his friends. The remaining missionaries eventually reached French Polynesia, where they eagerly explored the islands, interacted with the people, and baptized many willing converts.

Nearly 20 years later, two RLDS missionaries, Charles Wandell and Glauod Rodger, stopped in Tahiti for ship repairs on their way to Australia. While in Tahiti, they stumbled onto a local church member who led them to a thriving congregation known as “Tiona,” from the Tahitian word for *Zion*. They sat while the chapel filled with worshipers singing in Tahitian “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning!” The missionaries rejoiced at discovering people familiar with the Restoration story, and they soon united with the Reorganization.

When news from Tahiti reached North America, the excitement was contagious! Leaders included a palm tree in the new church seal to represent the church’s presence in French Polynesia, and members of the Ohio branch meeting in Kirtland Temple named themselves “Siona” after their sister branch in Tahiti. Then, as now, the vision of Zion, the peaceable kingdom, calls us onward wherever we might be in the world.

CCS 634: “When We Lift Our Pack and Go” (verse 2)

Reader Three

One of the best-known missionaries of the 19th century was J.J. Cornish. “Johnnie” passionately accepted the call to open new congregations. He traveled thousands of miles to Invite People to Christ, baptize those who accepted the invitation, and establish congregations

throughout Michigan, Indiana, Ontario, and Saskatchewan. His autobiography details his history, which included defending the faith through debates and occasionally fleeing from the threat of mob violence. What was Cornish's secret to planting a congregation? He simply built it one member at a time.

In the 1870s, he set out to start a congregation in London, Ontario, Canada. He joined the Sons of Temperance Hall, where for \$1 a night plus janitorial duties, he could use the building for preaching. Within 16 months, his congregation grew to 70 members. By the end of 1875, the London Congregation had built and dedicated a new church.

Cornish was beloved for his personal touch in missionary work and often remembered for his kind, blue eyes. His enthusiastic approach to outreach continues to inspire Community of Christ members today.

CCS 634: "When We Lift Our Pack and Go" (verse 3)

Reader Four

Like J.J. Cornish, G.S. Chawla felt the call to Invite People to Christ. In the 1960s he traveled throughout seven agricultural villages of the Sora people in Berhampur, India. With the help of Apostle Charles Neff, Chawla created a network of missionary volunteers called "Gospel Workers." Many were illiterate farmers. They gathered every Friday, and Chawla taught them lessons from the Bible. The Gospel Workers then would spend the next day traveling to a village, meeting with people, and encouraging them to come to a meeting Sunday.

When Sunday arrived, the Gospel Workers would teach the lesson they had learned from Chawla two days before. Through this unique form of evangelism, the good news of Jesus Christ reach isolated areas.

Proclaim the gospel. Evangelize the world. Each one, reach one. Invite People to Christ. Whatever we call it, this Mission Initiative is an old and familiar friend and has always been part of Community of Christ.

CCS 634: "When We Lift Our Pack and Go" (verse 4)

Ministry of Music

A number of new and historic hymns in Community of Christ Sings were written with an evangelism theme in mind. Consider having a musically gifted congregation member share one of the beautifully written hymns inspiring the call of all members to Invite People to Christ.

CCS 622: "Send Forth Your Light, O Zion"

Morning Message: Sermon based on Matthew 25:35–41

In lieu of a sermon, consider:

- A. Inviting two or three people from the congregation to share their experience with the Mission Initiative of Invite People to Christ. Testimonies may include a recent convert sharing his or her journey to Community of Christ.*
- B. Inviting a multigenerational member to share the impact of personal relationships in his or her return to Community of Christ; or perhaps a member could note the experience of sharing the peace of Christ with someone who later was welcomed into Community of Christ.*
- C. Inviting the congregation to divide into groups of three to five. Reflect on these questions: What lessons can we learn from the stories about the early missionaries and their approaches to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others? When have you felt called to share the gospel of Christ with others? How is our congregation answering the call to Invite People to Christ*

A Disciple's Generous Response

Individuals and the congregation are invited to designate all or a portion of an offering for the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation in an effort to help preserve and share church heritage for future generations. Donations may be sent to Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, P.O. Box 338, Nauvoo, IL 62354. If individual donors wish to receive a receipt acknowledging their tax-deductible donation, please indicate so when submitting the donation.

Offertory Story:

Ella Devore and her husband, L.R., arrived in French Polynesia in 1891 as missionaries. It didn't take them long to see transportation as crucial to spreading the gospel of Christ in the South Pacific. Unfortunately, the church did not own a boat. The two prayed earnestly for an answer to their problem. Then one day they heard the words, "Write and make your wants known through the "Home Column." The "Mothers' Home Column" was a regular feature in the *Saints' Herald*. Begun by Marietta Walker in 1886, the "Home Column" gave counsel, encouraged healthy diets and clean homes, and invited discussion on all church issues. It was quite popular, even among men!

The Devores followed the guidance of the Spirit and sent a letter to the "Mothers' Home Column." Marietta Walker responded by pleading with her readers to support construction of the "Evanelia," a missionary boat. Women were encouraged to make donations on their birthdays: one penny for each year. Walker also co-authored a book of poetry and donated all proceeds to the "Evanelia." Within two years, enough funds were raised to build and christen the "gospel boat." The "Evanelia" was just one of many missionary endeavors supported by "Mothers' Home Column" readers.

Blessing and Receiving Mission Tithes

Introduction to the Closing Hymn

Our closing hymn today was written by Geoffrey Spencer. As an appointee minister, apostle, and later president of the Council of Twelve, Geoffrey traveled the world, sharing the gospel. While meeting with strangers and building relationships with others, Geoffrey often was asked, "What does the church believe today?" With his incredible gift for words and rhyme, Geoffrey attempted to answer that question in "Let Us Give Praise to the God of Creation." Let us join together in singing Geoffrey's hymn about the foundational beliefs and unique mission of our faith community.

***Closing Hymn: CCS 607: "Let Us Give Praise to the God of Creation"**

***Sending Forth/Benediction**

In the benediction and/or sending forth, incorporate the service emphasis of church heritage and the theme of "Invite People to Christ."

***Response**

Postlude

***Please stand as you are able.**