



Community of Christ
Historic Sites Foundation

Come to the Temple---To Visit or to Serve

By Cherie Buletza

I first experienced Kirtland Temple in 1967 when I was 21 years old, living and working in Washington D.C. in preparation for going overseas. A good friend who hailed from Eastlake, near Cleveland, Ohio, suggested a weekend in her home town. I had a Triumph Spitfire and more sense of adventure than good sense; so, of course, we left for Eastlake after work on a Friday.

Around 11:30 Saturday night, as kids are prone to do, we were tooling around the country roads of Eastlake with no destination in mind. Down a hill we went and then zoomed up the other side. The road curved as we neared the crest of the hill. I was watching the dark road as we raced around the bend, but there was a bright light in my periphery vision to the right. "What's that?" I asked, as I slammed on the brakes and screeched to a halt. We backed up, stopped, and got out of the car to stare at this massive white building seemingly in the middle of nowhere with floodlights shining on it from the ground and the roof, lighting it up like midday. There, on a plaque above the center window, were the words "House of the Lord." "Oh, my goodness, Sharon," I exclaimed, awestruck, "this is the Kirtland Temple!"

Forty-two years later I've come back to Kirtland---intentionally, this time. And, ironically, my long-time friend Sharon, who now lives in Phoenix, met me in Kansas City to drive to Kirtland with me. This time I've come not to gawk, although I do that every day, but to serve as a tour guide. The idea began to take root when I read a notice in *The Saints' Herald* in January 2009 that folks are invited to volunteer at the Temple as guides, groundskeepers, maintenance workers, and shopkeepers. I recognized this as something I wanted to do, so I began planning for an October arrival. And now it has come to pass.

The new Visitor's Center alone is worth the trip to Kirtland. It houses a lovely museum with interesting 1830 artifacts. Many guests stroll through the museum while waiting for their tour to begin. The Mercantile, the bookshop and store, is a well-lit, airy space that houses books galore on historical persons, places, and things, as well as candy to cameras. The original finial from the roof of the temple, towers behind the main desk/kiosk in the center of the gallery. The administrative wing contains a library where temple staff can borrow many of the same books that are on sale in the Mercantile. One can also peruse some excellent out-of-print historical books to add to one's personal storehouse of knowledge about Kirtland and the temple. The Reflecting Chapel is nestled in the education wing and is designed to provide space for meditation. But it also works well as a quiet place for a nursing baby to have a snack. And,



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lastly, is the theater where the tours begin. I can only say that when the curtains open, if you don't gasp, get chills, or raise goose bumps, you may not have a heartbeat.

The temple staff is another great reason to come to Kirtland. Dedicated, hard-working, knowledgeable, loving people keep the historic properties up and running. The magnificent grounds are cared for by volunteers who start their day with the dawn. Their labors are vocally appreciated by the thousands of guests who traverse the walkway from Visitor's Center to Temple. Anyone who has a green thumb or enjoys working in the beautiful out-of-doors will find satisfaction working in the Temple gardens. If garden labor isn't appealing, the Mercantile can offer a pleasant place to help visitors lighten their pockets. You can see in their eyes that they want to purchase a memory of their visit, and you can be the knowledgeable retailer who helps them make the perfect selection. If, like me, your preference is to tell people where to go, choosing to be a tour guide is just thing for you. The volunteer tour guides (interpreters) and shopkeepers (Mercantile staff) share all of the duties that keep the Visitor's Center open for business. In the evenings you may find the temple staff sharing a meal and fellowship.

And, finally, the best reason for visiting or serving in Kirtland is the Temple itself. It is a remarkable testament to a dedicated people of faith. Tour guides have the responsibility to be as historically accurate as possible in interpreting the events of the 1830's for their guests. The prepared script has been researched and developed to guide the interpreters through the important points. I was surprised to discover how much emotional baggage I carry regarding the temple and how little I really know about church history. My month in Kirtland was an eye-opening, exciting, and fulfilling learning venture. Watching other volunteer guides discover new facets of the temple and church history for themselves just added value to my overall enjoyment. In the end, the best part of the challenge is deciding how to incorporate my new-found knowledge into my own presentations so that my guests can experience the Kirtland Temple with flavor and awe and emotional satisfaction.

My month in Kirtland is now over and I'm back in New Jersey, but much of my heart remains in Kirtland. I'm going back to do it all again in the spring. If you have time and inclination, I'd encourage you to come to Kirtland with me. Volunteers are welcome to come and serve in several areas: maintenance, gardens, retail store, museum/artifact management, tour guides. Choose what suits your personality and talents. To make service at Kirtland a reality in your life, contact Lachlan Mackay at lmackay@cofchrist.org or call 217-453-2246. I'll see you there!