



Community of Christ

Historic Sites Foundation

Experiencing Congregations in Mission *Community of Christ Heritage Day Service*

Prelude & Gathering

While worshippers enter the sanctuary, consider showing a collection of photos from the congregation's past that reflect the many contributions and stories from past and current members. This history could be displayed as a slide show, table display near the sanctuary entrance, or a worship center placed near the rostrum.

Congregational Life (*Announcements, Joys, and Concerns*)

Welcome & Call to Worship:

While welcoming the congregation, the worship leader should introduce the Heritage Day theme and connect it to Community of Christ's five Mission Initiatives. For services based on the remaining four Mission Initiatives, go to www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org.

Scriptural Reading: *Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a*

Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.

Gathering Hymn: CCS 224 "There's an Old, Old Path"

One of the most beloved hymns from our faith tradition was written in a congregational setting. Vida Smith nestled into a pew in preparation for morning worship at the Old Brick Church in Lamoni, Iowa. Her family members and friends helped build the church and sanctuary where she sat that day. The same family and friends lived close enough to the church that they could easily walk to the Sunday morning services. As Vida listened to the sermon that day, she looked out the sanctuary window to a path that led to the brick church. Her mind began to ponder the "old, old path" in her own life, a journey that included her walk with Christ and the community of friends and believers she had encountered along the way. She jotted her thoughts in hymn form on the back of her quarterly that day. Vida later crossed paths with her cousin, Audentia, on the steps of the brick church as they departed the service that day. She shared her writing with Audentia and invited her to compose the music that would accompany her new hymn. Audentia agreed and within days the two women had created one of the most treasured hymns in Community of Christ history entitled, "Theres an Old, Old Path."

Invocation

Response

Prayer for Peace

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

Hymn of Peace: CCS 319 “God’s Melody of Peace”

Generations of our faith community all over the world have worked tirelessly in building signal communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. This hymn, written by Barbara Howard, captures the beauty of music in a way that reflects Community of Christ’s call to pursue peace throughout the world.

Stories, Past and Present, of Congregations in Mission

The following section includes two stories from our faith community’s past that reflect the Mission Initiative of Experiencing Congregations in Mission. The third story should be one shared by a member of the congregation that reflects a story of the congregation serving in a way that reflects Christ’s mission.

Story: Women of Sandwich, Illinois, Helping Those in Need

[Story is included in the readings section below]

CCS 359: “We Are One in the Spirit” (verse one)

Story: A Child Leads the Way to Community

[Story is included in the readings section below]

CCS 359: “We Are One in the Spirit” (verse two)

Story: Our Congregation Serves in Mission

Invite an individual to share a story about how your congregation has reflected Christ’s mission.

CCS 359: “We Are One in the Spirit” (verse three)

Sermon: Experiencing Congregations in Mission

Sermon Suggestions: *Consider offering a sermon based on Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a as it relates to the unique faith community and journey of your congregation. How has your congregation reflected Christ’s mission over the years? What unique talents and ministries do you see reflected in the individuals that gather each week in your sanctuary? How does the Mission Initiative “Experience Congregations in Mission” resonate for you and your faith community?*

CCS 359: “We Are One in the Spirit” (verse four, final verse)

Disciples Generous Response:

Both 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 made online at www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org or sent by mail 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 so indicate when submitting the donation.

Offertory Reading:

Throughout Community of Christ history, we often find examples of early church members working together to support Christ's mission in their congregations and personal lives.

An early example of a community of believers joining together to help one in need comes from Rosie Sellars. Following WWII, Rosie and her family struggled to survive in Germany. Her father was killed during the war, and the responsibilities of providing for the family were in her young mother's hands. Everywhere Rosie looked she saw homelessness and food scarcity. She remembered food being rationed. Some nights, there wasn't enough bread on the table to feed her family. She described their desperation, "Many times some of my family went on an all-day bike trip out to beg for a piece of bread from a farmer or, if really lucky, an egg."

During this time Rosie relied on the support of the local congregation and those abroad to help her family survive. She explained:

"...In 1947 my mother was thrown off her bicycle when hit by a truck. The doctors thought she would die that night, but I trusted in Jesus and prayed all night. The next day I went to an elder and asked him to go and see Mother in the hospital to administer to her. She remained in the hospital for four months before she came home. It was during those four months that we received several CARE packages from church members in Independence, Missouri. They meant a lot to us, especially the food. They were an answer to prayer."

This story exemplifies Community of Christ's timeless calling to help those in need. Today, we have the opportunity, like those in Germany and Independence, Missouri, to model Christ's mission for future generations.

As you share financially through Mission Tithes, or if you give regularly through eTithing, please use this time to consider your commitment and how you will tithe to your true capacity of time, talent, and testimony.

Blessing and Receiving of Local and Worldwide Mission Tithes

Closing Hymn, CCS 570 "God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story"

We close today's service singing a hymn written by one of our many talented hymn writers in today's Community of Christ. The hymn, "God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story," was written by Barbara Howard. She shares that the hymn words were written in reflection to a sermon she heard while sitting in a worship service at her local congregation. Like Vida Smith decades before, the words to Barbara's hymn came to her while sitting in a worship service at a Community of Christ congregation.

Sending Forth/Benediction

Postlude

Readings That Appear in the “Experience Congregations in Mission” Community of Christ Heritage Day Service

Reading: Women of Sandwich, Illinois, Helping Others in Need

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. 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 a wonderful example of compassionate ministry and building community.

Reading: A Child Leads The Way to Community

In 1958, at age eleven, Bruce Crockett returned to Shriners Hospital in San Francisco for more surgery to help offset the residual effects of having had polio in 1948. He had already had three muscle transplant surgeries in 1954-55 and 1957. Bruce was not looking forward to being in the hospital again, especially during an era when parents were not allowed to visit their children in person, to hug, to touch, to kiss. The patients visited their parents on Sunday afternoon through a second story window, yelling back and forth.

Bruce soon became aware of the need for community amongst the patients. The children went to school together, lived together on the ward, but did not have moments to slow down, worship, pray, or respond to uplifting music. Bruce felt an urge to hold church on the ward. He shared:

“I felt it was important for us to be connected in this setting. I wrote my parents and asked them to contact Reverend Kessel, my Pastor at the Methodist church where I attended with my family. Reverend Kessel came to the hospital and brought my Bible. The Hospital allowed my Pastor to visit me in person only once.”

With the help of the head nurse, a small room and a phonograph was reserved for a weekly service and Tennessee Ernie Ford Gospel Music was offered for the music. On Saturday, Bruce went around the

ward and invited the other kids to come to worship the following day. The Custodian took the bed and furniture out of the room while Bruce set up the record player.

The guests arrived on crutches, in wheel chairs, and some on gurneys. Bruce began the service by reciting the 23rd Psalm and then invited the kids, for those who knew it, to pray the Lord's prayer. A story of Jesus from one of the gospels came next. After Bruce read the story about Jesus, he asked his fellow patients if they wanted to hear some gospel music. They all enthusiastically agreed. Bruce described what happened next:

"I put on the most upbeat gospel song on the recording and to my surprise the kids started bouncing up and down in their wheelchairs and on their gurneys and those on crutches started hopping on one foot. The Head Nurse was smiling in the doorway but when we put on another upbeat song she intervened to slow things down because we were all sweating from dancing."

Bruce continued as worship leader until he was released from the hospital. The church services were very popular, especially the dancing. The calling Bruce experienced as a child in 1958 continued long into his adulthood when he served as an appointee minister and spiritual formation coordinator in Community of Christ.