



# Community of Christ

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## Historic Sites Foundation

### **Faithfully Serve God: Pursue Peace Mission Initiative**

Community of Christ Heritage Day  
Sunday, September 18, 2016

#### **Prelude & Gathering**

*While the worshippers enter the sanctuary, ask a musician to play familiar hymns that include words reflecting faithful ministry and service. Hymn examples include: “We Are One in the Spirit” (CCS #359), “Hark! The Voice of Jesus Calling” (CCS #592), “Seek Ye First” (CCS #599) “O My People, Saith the Spirit” (CCS #604). The familiar music will help set the tone for the service*

#### **Congregational Life (Announcements)**

#### **Prayer for Peace**

*You may either 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](http://www.cofchrist.org/prayerpeace)) or adapt the prayer to reflect this special Heritage Day service. Once the candle is lit, have either the person lighting the candle or the choir begin singing the hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” It is a familiar hymn for most congregations and the worship guests should start singing along with the soloists/choir shortly after the hymn has begun.*

#### **Hymn of Preparation: CCS #307: *Let There Be Peace on Earth***

#### **Welcome & Call to Worship:**

*While welcoming the congregation, the worship leader should introduce the Heritage Day theme and a brief overview of what to expect in the worship service for new guests/seekers who may be in attendance. This service will focus on the call of Christ to Pursue Peace and will include stories about historic members of our faith community who have faithfully served God by acting as peacemakers on both a local and global level.*

#### **Call to Worship: *Doctrine and Covenants 163: 3a-b***

*“You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness.*

*Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable Kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace."*

**\*Hymn: CCS #317: *The Peace of Jesus Christ***

**\*Invocation**

**\*Response**

### **Children's Moment: Called to Proclaim Peace**

*Below is a brief story behind the creation of our church seal. Because the story is connected to the church in French Polynesia, consider creating a Polynesian themed worship center with shells, tropical colors, flower leis, etc. Ask the children of the congregation to gather round as you share the story behind the church seal. If your congregation has the time and resources, consider passing our reproduction leis for the children (may be found at any party store).*

#### **Story of the Church Seal:**

In the 1870s, two Community of Christ missionaries ended up in Tahiti by accident. Their ship had unexpected mechanical problems while in route to Australia and the captain decided to stop at Papeete, Tahiti, to get the ship repaired. While the ship was docked for repairs, the missionaries set out to explore the area. Soon they stumbled upon a local member who led them to a thriving congregation of our church known as "Tiona," from the Tahitian word for "Zion."

The missionaries took their seats on a long pew made from the center rib of a coconut frond as the chapel filled with worshippers. Soon the congregation burst into singing a familiar hymn in Tahitian, "The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning!" – the beloved hymn written for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836. Rejoicing with their discovery of an early congregation of the church, the missionaries soon wrote home about their exciting experience and baptized fifty-one members in the nearby lagoon, before continuing on to Australia.

When the news from Tahiti reached our faith community in North America, the excitement was contagious. The letter was shared at the 1874 General Conference in Plano, Illinois. Those in attendance encouraged church leaders to create a committee to design the first church seal. A seal design was created and proposed at the Plano conference. The seal included a palm tree to represent the church members in French Polynesia. The palm tree tradition continued in the seal created in 1891 which can be seen on your coloring sheets. Notice the word "Peace" appears above a branch of olive leaves, also symbolizing peace. The seal was inspired by Isaiah 11:1-9, which speaks of the *shalom* ushered in by the Messiah, where justice and righteousness abide, and where violence is no more.

The seal represents a peaceful Zion, something the early members of our church felt was very important.

*Note: Following the Children's Moment, you may want the children of the congregation to jointly work on a coloring sheet of the early seal of the church. (See attachments)*

## **Ministry of Music**

*Those sharing in the Ministry of Music may wish to choose their own selection or sing, "Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield," CCS #321. This is an upbeat hymn that will be fun for both the choir and those listening. Consider adding hand clapping and encouraging those in attendance to sing along. A second choir option to consider includes having the choir sing the familiar hymn "The Spirit of God, Like a Fire is Burning," to draw on the historic connection to Tahiti mentioned in the children's story.*

## **A Time for Reflection and Commitment to Pursue Peace**

*Below you will find three stories that may be used as examples from church history where early church members have pursued peace. Have three separate volunteers share the stories. They may read the stories, but it is preferred that they share the story comfortably (without reading) as though telling a story to a friend. Between each of the church history stories, encourage two members of the congregation to share their own stories of pursuing peace and justice. If they are uncomfortable speaking of themselves, encourage them to share a story about someone who inspires them to pursue peace.*

### **Church History Example #1: Newel K. Whitney Shares a Lesson of Peace with Young Joseph Smith III**

Tucked in a corner office of the Red Brick Store in Nauvoo is a wooden writing desk. It carries a story that impacted Joseph Smith III's life. The desk was a gift from Newel K. Whitney, a family friend and former bishop in Kirtland and Nauvoo. While many of Joseph's neighbors were planning to leave Nauvoo in 1846, a few friends and relatives gave Joseph gifts. Much to his mother's dismay, among those gifts given were a bowie knife and a small pistol.

As Newel and his family prepared to depart Nauvoo, he shared with Joseph a gift to remember him by: a writing desk. Newel compared his desk to the other gifts Joseph received and shared that the pistol and knife were weapons of war. Joseph later reflected that Newel:

*"...wished to impress upon me the sentiment that 'the pen is mightier than the sword.' I seemed to feel at the time that his intention was to foster within me a spirit of peace rather than one of conflict... The gift of Bishop Whitney led to the reflection that the spirit of weapons of war were among the evanescent things of life and would necessarily perish with the using but that the pen, mightier than they, would produce permanent things upon which the judgment of men would be based in the great hereafter. At all events these were the effects they produced upon me, for I did not imbibe the spirit of war, and had little use for its dangerous weapons."*

Newel K. Whitney's desk was not only a wonderful gift from a family friend, it was a powerful lesson of peace that Joseph carried with him the rest of his life.

## **Volunteer Shares a Story Reflecting “Pursue Peace”**

### **Church History Example #2: Joseph Smith III Forgives Thomas Sharp**

A remarkable story is told of Joseph Smith III forgiving Thomas C. Sharp, a man who was likely involved in the death of Joseph Smith III's father, Joseph Smith, Jr.. In 1893, Joseph III and Thomas Sharp happened to cross paths on the streets of Carthage, Illinois. Carthage was the historic town where Joseph Smith III's father and uncle, Hyrum Smith, were imprisoned and assassinated in 1844. Thomas Sharp was the editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, a newspaper published in a river town located a few miles south of Nauvoo. Church members long believed that Thomas Sharp, through the pages of his newspaper, fanned the flames of hatred and persecution towards the church and especially Joseph Smith, Jr.. After the mob broke into the Carthage Jail and killed the two Smith brothers, a trial was held and Sharp was charged with the Smith murders. Although he was acquitted of the charges, the court trial left church members questioning whether justice was truly served.

When Joseph Smith III saw Thomas Sharp in Carthage that day in 1893, nearly fifty years after his father's death, the man before him was not the fierce, strong man he remembered. Rather, Sharp was a helpless paralytic dependent on the mercy and compassion of those around him. Joseph's interaction with the man who was charged with his father's death caused a disturbance among some of the older church members. They believed that Joseph Smith III should have never acknowledged Thomas Sharp in Carthage that day.

Joseph Smith III replied to his critics by penning an article that was later featured in the *Saints' Herald*. Joseph's article, "Required to Forgive," highlighted the importance of forgiveness and encouraged readers to look to Christ's example of forgiving those who persecuted and despised him as he hung from the cross: "We remember that our blessed Lord, our living exemplar, when suffering from the cruel pangs inflicted upon him to his death, lifted his eyes and heart to his Father, and said: 'Forgive them; they know not what they do.'"

## **Volunteer Shares a Story Reflecting “Pursue Peace”**

### **Church History Example #3:**

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.”*

Perce Judd’s passion and purpose reflected Christ’s mission of justice and peace.

### **Volunteer Shares a Story Reflecting “Pursue Peace”**

#### **Disciples Generous Response:**

*Both individuals and the congregation is 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 as such when submitting the donation.*

#### **Offertory Reading:**

Throughout Community of Christ history, we discover empowering examples of generosity. One story is comes from Apostle Gomer Griffith. Gomer served as a caretaker and tour guide at the Kirtland Temple during his late years of life. The following story occurred during a reunion at the Kirtland Temple when Gomer was in his senior years. The experience was such a powerful one for Gomer that shared this story in the *Saints’ Herald*. Gomer writes:

*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, for 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 a 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 Griffith, *Saints’ Herald*, 1935

This story exemplifies Community of Christ's timeless calling to give generously. Today, we have the opportunity, like those gathered at the Kirtland Temple so many years ago, to model generosity for future generations.

### **Blessing and Receiving of Mission Tithes**

**\*Closing Hymn, CCS #319: *God's Melody of Peace***

**\*Sending Forth/Benediction**

*Following the benediction, encourage the choir to lead the congregation in a response that includes Audrey Schultz's hymn, "One Common Prayer," CCS #313. The hymn is limited to one verse:*

*"One Common prayer have we, one oft repeated dream.  
To God we lift one plea; to see the world at peace."*

**Postlude**