



Community of Christ
Historic Sites Foundation

Take Up Your Cross

Community of Christ Heritage Day
Sunday, September 16, 2018

Prelude & Gatheringⁱ

While worshippers enter the sanctuary, provide meditation music, including familiar hymns from yesterday and today, which will prepare the congregation to focus on the day's themes.

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 the lectionary theme of the day, "Take Up Your Cross." Stories shared during the service will reflect our faith community's shared tradition of sacrificial love, based on the examples of Christ.

Scriptural Reading: *Doctrine and Covenants 162:3a-b; 163:2b*

162:3a-b. Do not be discouraged. You have not been promised an easy path, but you have been assured that the Spirit that calls you will also accompany you. 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.

163:2b. 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.

Responsive Reading (*Lu Mountenay*)

Leader: See before you, O God, disciples gathered to worship you—disciples who are broken too:

Congregation: **The repentant, the vulnerable, the waiting, the forgiven.**

All: See before you, O God, your cross accepted.

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

Early missionaries often used music to “Invite People to Christ.” This hymn was written by Parley P. Pratt, one of the first missionaries in the church, who was among four missionaries sent from western New York to the Missouri frontier—an 800-mile journey—in 1830.

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 570 “God, Whose Grace Redeems Our Story”

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 inspiration of our shared past, acknowledges our present calling, and inspires us onward to continue writing our sacred story, weaving peace and justice through the vision.

Stories, Past and Present, of Sacrificial Love

The following section includes four stories from our faith community’s past that tell of Saints who “Took Up the Cross” in their own unique ways. As the congregation listens to the stories, encourage them to picture themselves in these situations, and consider how they might have responded under similar circumstances.

Story: A Sacrifice for Family and Church

W. W. Blair, before serving in the roles of apostle and member of the First Presidency from the 1870s through the 1890s, served the young Reorganized church as a missionary. Years later, Blair’s daughter Minnie remembered that when she was thirteen her mother, Elizabeth Blair, became pregnant. But after much thought and prayer, Elizabeth decided not to tell her husband, for she feared this news would prevent him from carrying out his responsibilities in the mission field. However, members of their home congregation became aware of her family’s struggles to survive during this challenging time, so provided Elizabeth and the children with whatever help they could. For many long months, Elizabeth kept her secret from her husband, but at last felt it only right and wise to tell him. Once the new baby, Frederick, was born, a member of the congregation wrote to tell Blair of the arrival of his new son.

In today’s world, when we take air travel and instant communication for granted, we may have difficulty understanding Elizabeth’s decision not to tell her husband that a new baby was on its way. But to this woman, who loved her church as much as her family, her silence demonstrated an extreme action of sacrificial love. It is important for us to remember what so many of our early missionary families sacrificed willingly in order to spread Christ’s message of love and redemption.

CCS #550: *We Are Pilgrims on a Journey* (verse #1)

Story: The Sacrifice of a Pair of Shoes

During World War II, church members in Europe were forced to make incredibly difficult decisions. Wilhem Kreisle, of Nuremberg, Germany, chose one day to sacrifice a pair of shoes that he gave willingly to a slave laborer who was struggling to survive. But, this seemingly simple act of generosity went far beyond giving up a pair of shoes. For his act of compassion, Kreisle was arrested, tried, and sentenced to the Dachau extermination camp. During the next four years, he endured the threat of being ushered into a camp death chamber. Although Kreisle survived this horrendous ordeal, he had been willing to sacrifice his life for the wellbeing of another. Wilhem Kreisle truly “Took Up the Cross” in the name of Christ’s loving compassion.

CCS #550: *We Are Pilgrims on a Journey* (verse #2)

Story: An Act of Sacrificial Love

When Apostle Charles Neff first arrived in India in 1966, he 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, went to her hut, and returned with a bowl of water. She then proceeded to break several cultural taboos as she knelt before him 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 a man outside of 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. Neff 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 a true act of sacrificial love.

CCS #550: *We Are Pilgrims on a Journey* (verse #3)

Story: Sacrificing for Those in Need

Elkana and Alicia Odupa learned about the Community of Christ while living in Nairobi, Kenya. In 1985, Elkana’s company moved his family to Turkana-Lodwar. While settling into their new community, Elkana and Alicia felt the Spirit encouraging him to take an active role in helping alleviate the suffering among the Turkana people. The Odupas saw that the Turkana people needed new avenues of income, not dependent on the production of changaa, a traditional home-brewed liquor. 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 and despair. In addition to sharing new trades, the Odupas also introduced their new

neighbors to the gospel of Christ. People were baptized and a faith community formed. The Odupas also witnessed healing, reconciliation, and redemption take place among those who once struggled with addiction. What drove the Odupas to leave the comfort of their home, dedicating 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.

CCS #354: *Community of Christ* (verse #4)

Reflections: Brief sermon based on Mark 8:27-38

or

Congregation sharing examples of sacrificial love

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 discover empowering examples of generosity. As we lift up the Mission Initiative to Abolish Poverty, End Suffering, we are called to help those who hurt—feed the hungry, support compassionate ministries, and respond in times of crisis.

An early example of such generosity happened on the streets of Nauvoo, Illinois, over 170 years ago. Andrew Workman remembered standing with Joseph Smith and several other men alongside a fence next to the Smith house. While the men conversed with one another, they were interrupted by an approaching man who appeared very concerned. The man shared that a poor brother of the church had just lost his home and belongings in a house fire the night before. Immediately, the men gathered around and shared their sympathies and concern for their fellow friend. What a tragedy! Then, Brother Joseph reached into his pocket, pulled out five dollars and said, “I feel sorry for this brother to the amount of five dollars; how much do you all feel sorry?”

This story exemplifies Community of Christ’s timeless calling to help those in need. Today, we have the opportunity, like those in Nauvoo 170 years ago, to model compassion and generosity 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 #384: *The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning*

This historic hymn is near and dear to the heart of the church, and it is fitting to have it send us forth today. It was written by W.W. Phelps in preparation for the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and captures the spiritual excitement and enthusiasm experienced by early church members in 1830s Kirtland. Emma Smith included the hymn as the last selection in her first hymnal, which came off the presses only a few weeks before the Kirtland Temple dedication in March 1836.

Sending Forth/Benediction

Postlude

¹ The service above is a 2018 Heritage Day service inspired by the 9/16/18 service outline available online through Community of Christ worship resources. To view this service along with additional worship resources and videos available for congregational use, go to: www.cofchrist.org