Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well...

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

– Isaiah 1:16-18
**The Tidings of Zion** is published quarterly by the Conference of Restoration Elders. It is under the editorial responsibility of the Coordinating Council, Richard Neill, Chairman. It is sent to all who desire to receive it.

*An annual contribution of $20 is appreciated.*

**Purpose of the Conference of Restoration Elders**

“To bring solidarity to a growing number of Restoration branches and Latter Day Saints in general during this period of disruption and fragmentation” (Conference Operating Guidelines accepted in 1996).

The Conference exists to:

1. Organize the coming together of Melchisedec priesthood, as well as the Aaronic priesthood members, for:
   - Spiritual preparation and to unify our efforts on behalf of the work to which we are called.
   - Much needed fellowship and fraternity to prepare us to defend and preserve the faith.
   - Identify and seek divine guidance concerning the critical issues now confronting the Church.
   - Chart a course of action that will maintain the gospel as restored in 1830 (Original Letter of Intention and 1993 Conference Materials).
2. Support Restoration branches in their efforts to work together.
3. Provide needed resources to branches and members as they are requested.
4. Offer ongoing support and resources to Restoration priesthood.
5. Offer support to the elders to take the gospel message to the world.

The Conference is not the Church, but a gathering of the Melchisedec priesthood to share in testimony, prayer, legislation, and preparation to return to our branches better equipped and unified to perform our duties to minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In addition, the Conference of Restoration Elders provides a forum for Aaronic priesthood and member alike to share in fellowship and to be nurtured in the Word. The Conference helps the scattered Saints and isolated branches throughout the world to enjoy the hope that we find in Jesus Christ and each other.

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The Pastors of Zion (POZ) and the Conference of Restoration Elders (CRE) invite all Restoration Branch saints and priesthood to consider participating in the 2020 Restoration Branch Family Reunion and Conference of Restoration Elders. The combined reunion and elder’s conference will be held at the Center Place Restoration School (CPRS)/Waldo Ave Restoration Branch from June 21 thru 26th, 2020. For information and to register, go to the CRE website at www.eldersconference.org. Or to register directly, use the following link, https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020Reunion-CRE. You can also go to the CRE website to print out a registration form to mail in. There is only one registration form for both the Reunion and the CRE.

As in previous years, the primary focus of the week will be on worship, classes and fellowship for all, and an opportunity for the elders to meet in conference. This year’s overall theme is, Settle This in Your Hearts: Take Up Your Cross and Be My Disciple (Luke 14:27-28).

The first thing we must do is settle in our hearts our response to Christ’s ministry if we are truly going to avail ourselves of what the good spirit can offer us. In Luke 14:27-28 we are admonished that, "...whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Therefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.” This scripture emphasizes that we need to look at our hearts and settle once and for all whether we want to be a disciple of Christ.

We need to settle in our hearts whether we will do the things which Christ taught and commanded us to do. We must become single-minded in our focus and in our purpose. F. Henry Edwards wrote, “You cannot build a new world without new-world builders. Men whose hearts and minds turn to some other homeland can never succeed as pioneers of a new nation…It is similarly impossible to build the Kingdom of God with men whose interests and affections turn back to the kingdoms of this world. He who would assist in building the Kingdom of God must indeed be born again.” (Edwards, F. H., Fundamentals, 195, p. 134)

We must settle within ourselves whether we are truly disciples of Christ and citizens of His Kingdom. We can’t equivocate any longer. Reflecting on your life, your commitment, your response, and settling in your heart once and for all to keep His commandments and to be His disciples, will be the focus of the week. As individuals, we cannot be double-minded and expect that the Lord will, or can, use us to our fullest potential. If we are divided, we are of little worth to the work of the Kingdom. When we are divided, we are not able to concentrate. We are not able to fulfill that to which we are called and created to do. It is the same for us as a people. We cannot be divided and expect the Lord can, or will, use us to our fullest potential. (Adapted from an article in the Tidings of Zion, Issue 115, pg.11)

Through the following daily themes, we will focus on different aspects of what it means to settle in our hearts to take up our cross and be His disciples:

**Sunday:** Do the things which I shall teach, and command you. (Luke 14:28; Matt. 16:26; Luke 21:23; Moroni 4:4)

**Monday:** Take up your cross daily and follow me. (Matt 16:25; Matt. 10:33; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:23; Matt. 5:3; 3 Nephi 5:78)

**Tuesday:** Follow me, and feed my sheep. (D&C 105:6a; Mark 10:20; Moroni 9:6)

**Wednesday:** Fear not to share your testimony at a moment’s notice. (Luke 21:10-18; Moroni 3:2; D&C 21:5a; Alma 4:6; D&C 76:5 & 6g)

**Thursday:** Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you. (1 Peter 5:6-1; Alma 3:50; D&C 56:1b; II Nephi 3:61-66)

**Friday:** Come unto Christ and be perfected in Him. (Moroni 10:29; Matt. 10:33-34; Mosiah 3:21)
**Restoration Branch Family Reunion and Elders Conference Schedule**  
**June 21-26, 2020**  

“Settle This in Your Hearts: Take Up Your Cross and Be My Disciples”  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th><strong>Daily Themes</strong></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<td>Do the things which I shall teach, and command you</td>
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<td>Take up your cross daily and follow me</td>
<td>Follow me, and feed my sheep</td>
<td>Fear not to share your testimony at a moment’s notice</td>
<td>Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you</td>
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<td>9:00</td>
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<td>Prayer Service</td>
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<td>10:30</td>
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<td>Worship Service</td>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Classes</td>
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<td>12:00pm</td>
<td>Lunch (on your own)</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
<td>12:30 Picnic Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 - 6:30</td>
<td>Displays &amp; Exhibits Open in Gymnasium</td>
<td>1:30 – 3:00</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Afternoon Classes/Small Group Discussion</td>
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<td>(PLEASE NOTE) Elders Conference Meetings Begin</td>
<td>3:00 – 4:30</td>
<td>Women’s Council Sponsored Class</td>
<td>Women’s Council Sponsored Class</td>
<td>Family Fun &amp; Fellowship Event</td>
<td>Women’s Council Sponsored Class</td>
<td>Women’s Council Sponsored Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 – 5:00</td>
<td>Elders Conference Meetings Begin</td>
<td>Monday 1:30 to 5:00</td>
<td>Elders Conference Meetings</td>
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<td>Rest of Week 3:00 to 5:00</td>
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<td>5:00</td>
<td>Dinner on your own</td>
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<td>6:30</td>
<td>Song Service</td>
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**Registration and information desk will be open daily from 8:30am to 6:30pm**
Greetings, Saints across the world! As I was looking at our congregational calendar, we quickly came to the holiday time of year. The year 2019, again like years past, has gone in a flash! In my circle of family, friends, and church family, sadly, it has been a year of separation through death. I tell you this not for you to mourn but to urge each of us to remember and consider the days of our probation! These years, months, weeks, days, minutes, and even seconds are so short. Similar to Jesus’s return, we do not know the day nor the hour when our days of probation will end.

Before we get to the title of this article, read this scripture from Alma 9:40-42: “And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death; nevertheless there was a space granted unto man, in which he might repent; Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead. Now if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead;”

In September, my father lost one of his younger brothers who was unchurched. He was a man that had a good heart, but due to the wickedness of the world, he was caught up in the ways of Babylon. Years ago, my mother, Julie, had a dream where she saw three caskets. In one was a church member, the second was a family member (who also was a church member,) and lastly, in the third casket was my father’s brother. In the dream, he arose out of the casket exclaiming, “I don’t want to be a dead man!” This dream made a strong impression upon my mother of the need to share the fullness of the Gospel with those of our family who are unchurched, as well as those who are “churched” but have not received the fullness of the gospel. For him, his days of probation are over. For us, the opportunity to share the Gospel with him is over too.

Christmas is known in the Western world as a holiday of giving. While we may ponder the reasons whether or not to what degree that we might participate, I would urge you to participate in one aspect this year. This aspect is to give gifts. Let me explain!

Each of you who have walked into the waters of baptism have entered into a covenant. This covenant you made was, as is written in the prayers over the bread and the wine, “...that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them,” (D&C 17:22d.)

I suspect each of us desire to be in celestial glory. If we truly desire this, then read the requirements according to D&C 76:5, “They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name, and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given, that by keeping the commandments, they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; and who overcome by faith, and are sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true;”

Additionally, everyone who is not in celestial glory meets the following requirement (D&C 76:6g): “these are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore they obtained not the crown over the kingdom of our God.” Let us be baptized by authority and be valiant in testimony, enduring to the end!
Each of us that have made this authoritative covenant with God have a responsibility to be a part of fulfilling of the great commission proclaimed by Jesus himself in the New Testament. I don’t know about you, but I truly desire all of my loved ones, both in and out of the Church, to be able to dwell in celestial glory. The only way that will be able to happen is if we relay the message and then they accept it. I do not want to reach the judgment seat of Christ and have Jesus ask me why I didn’t invite my loved ones into His Church, only to answer Him with “I wasn’t comfortable doing that” or “I didn’t want to offend them.” Certainly, we need to be concerned about the eternal life of those around us rather than solely our relationship with them! Paul the Apostle believed similarly as he tells the Galatians, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel...For do I now please men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

You and I have the greatest gift to offer, and we don’t have to go to Walmart, Target, or any other store to get it! The cost of this gift is $0.00. What a bargain! The gift that you can give your loved ones this year is your testimony of Jesus Christ and His Church! The unchurched are more likely to attend a worship service this Christmas season. Make that worship service they attend be your branch. Let your branches make preparations as in Isaiah chapter 54:1-4, “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;”

Make our branches prepared both physically and spiritually for our tents to be enlarged to be ready for visitors. Our worship services need to be filled with the Spirit of God with power and authority. Our sermons need to truly preach the fullness of the Gospel in simplicity and purity. Our singing of the hymns need to be singing out, making a joyful noise unto the Lord, whether or not you believe you sing well.

My mother had another dream back in the 1980s during the beginning of the dark and cloudy night. In this dream, she saw our local RLDS church being engulfed in flames, burning to ash. In the blue sky away from the smoke, writing appeared, saying, “From the ashes of my Church shall arise new life, for I the Lord God shall cleanse out the evil from among my people!” We approach the New Year 2020. In the secular world, 20/20 vision is optimal. The Church again needs to have vision of the Kingdom! For many years, the Church has been needing corrective lenses but appears to not have been using them. Let the Church arise with renewed sense of vision and heed the warning from Proverbs 22:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”

Let this vision of the Kingdom be renewed with you as you go out of your comfort zone, and bring them in. Time is short! I’ll leave you with the words of a hymn:

“Revive Thy work, O Lord; Thy Mighty arm make bare; Speak with the voice that wakes the dead, And make Thy People hear!
Revive Thy work, O Lord; Create soul-thirst for Thee; And hung’ring for the bread of Life, Oh, may our spirits be.
Revive Thy work, O Lord; Exalt Thy precious name, And, by the Holy Ghost, our Love for Thee and Thine in-flame.
Revive Thy work, O Lord; Give power unto Thy word; Grant that Thy blessed gospel may in living faith be heard.
Revive Thy work, O Lord; And give refreshing showers; Thy glory shall be all Thine own, The blessing, Lord be ours. Amen.”

– Albert Midlane,
Hymn #93 Hymns of the Restoration (Blue)
Be Transformed and Be “The Living Church” of Jesus Christ

By Elder Vim Horn
Sibley, Missouri

We find in Romans 12:2 that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and we find in the Doctrine & Covenants, Section 1:5e, the claim that this Church is...the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I the Lord am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.

This year, the Conference of Restoration Elders is focusing on what it means to be transformed, to live transformed lives, and what it means to be the True and Living Church of Christ. Let me pose a couple of rhetorical questions for our consideration—Can a Church be The True Church and not be The Living Church? Are we The True Church?

Simply claiming so does not make it so. We are only the True Church when it is evident that we are the Living Church, alive in Christ and carrying forth the mission for which the Church was established. If it is Christ’s Church, then it must be a living church. A living body of faithful believers with the living Christ being the head thereof.

Until God breathed the breath of life into Adam, Adam was only a tabernacle of clay. He and we were created to be more than a tabernacle of clay. Until the Spirit is resident within the Church, the Church—the Body of Christ—is also only a tabernacle of clay. The Church is meant to be more than that. Apostle Joseph Luff in The Old Jerusalem Gospel accounts it this way:

...just as God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul and a channel of physical life to others, so Jesus “breathed” upon the organism called His Church, or spiritual body, and on the day of Pentecost the Spirit, the soul of the Church, descended from heaven and entered the earthly habitation prepared, and the Church became a living soul; the eyes, ears, hands, feet—the apostles, prophets, etc., saw, heard, and moved with spiritual insight under this baptism of life. It was to be the channel of the Godlife to the world—the spiritual transmitter of eternal good. Peter and the eleven stood up and promised this Holy Ghost unto all who would obey the message they were authorized to publish. The entire history from that day proves, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians and the Galatians, that they were “ministers of the Spirit.” (II Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:5.) A new dispensation had dawned upon the world. The law of Moses, which could not give life, was waxen old and vanished away, and the Church—the new creation—stood upon it as upon a footstool. The glory of the “Sun of Righteousness” clothed this beautiful creation of God, and the twelve stars shone in the apostolic crown upon her head. (Revelation 12:1.) Thus she appears as the Lamb’s wife.

The material for this new creation was chosen out of the world (John 15:16-21), and was told to not “conform” to the world again, but to be “transformed” into the image of her Lord. (Romans 12:2.)

We see the apostles of Christ transformed, no longer quavering with fear in back rooms but standing boldly declaring the gospel. We see believers living with one another in new ways. We see the early Church forming and becoming alive. We must ask ourselves: Are we willing to stand boldly? Are we willing to live our lives differently? Are we willing to be the True and Living Church?

We can have a Church with organization, members, priesthood, buildings, etc.; however, all are vain if the breath of life, the Spirit, is not resident and functioning within that Church. This is not to say that conventions and institutions aren’t necessary, but when it comes
to what captures our imaginations and motivates us, they are secondary to our fellowship with Jesus and each other.


There may be many individuals, but in the fellowship of the church they are unified and made “members one of another.” The unity which is spoken of in this image is not a unity which comes through institutional structure. It is a personal unity of people who are joined together by bonds of love, fellowship, and common participation in the Spirit of the Fellowship. The church is unified, not by institutional structure but by the experience of the presence of Christ’s Spirit in the common life of the fellowship.

Only when the Church is alive, bearing the fruits of the Spirit, is the claim of being the only True and Living Church not a boastful, empty claim. Are we, the Body of Christ, alive? Are we a people praising God and bearing evidence of the fruits of the Spirit?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22-26)

When we, as priesthood and a people, spend less time on establishing that we are the only True Church and more time on being *The Living Church*, then it will become evident that we are *The True Church*, and we will no longer need to spend time proving we are. When we stop seeking to be affirmed in our positions and allow the Spirit to transform us, then we are the Body of Christ, the True and Living Church in whom He is well pleased.

This is our focus, our mission—**To Be Transformed and Be The Living Church of Jesus Christ.**
live a life after Christ. They are vital to the walk of discipleship and the center of every success or failure in our lives. Jesus specifically spoke about these four areas in this passage, in the context of priority being the first commandment, our relationship with God, and then others. These four areas were the heart, the soul, the mind, and the body or our strength. We are going to focus on the mind and heart—the way we’re going to live our lives, the way we should transform our hearts and minds to lead us to a personal reviving encounter with God. Allow us to open not only our minds but our hearts to God for transformation.

I want you to be encouraged that God’s presence and power are enough to transform you. Do you believe that? You will not be the same. You will take on your identity in Christ and revive your heart and renew your mind to fulfill your destiny. Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.”

Body, mind, will, and our hearts. That is what we are supposed to present to Him as part of our sacrifice. Being truly born again means a renewal of body and mind and spirit. Paul speaks of the renewal of the mind. It’s a process by which the thoughts of the natural man are replaced, as it says in 1 Corinthians 2:16, by the “…mind of Christ.” This transformation of our mind—it’s ways, it’s thought, it’s intentions—are aligned with heavenly things. But this process involves the renewal of the spirit and the body as well. D&C 83:6c says the faithful “…are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.” What a wonderful testimony to us. Listen to the language of the scriptures as they describe the level of sacrifice the Lord requires that we make on our way through this transformation. He says, in Omni 1:47, “…offer your whole souls as an offering unto God.” In Romans 12:1, we just read “…present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God…” The Lord himself has said that we should keep our covenants by sacrifice, “…yea every sacrifice which I the Lord shall command” (D&C 94.) Are we prepared to sacrifice everything the Lord commands us to sacrifice? It’s tough to say yes on that because we don’t know yet what He’s going to ask us to sacrifice. But that is what it means to be transformed: renewed in your mind and transformed in your heart so that when He asks us to sacrifice, we’re willing to give it.

The sacrifice the Lord asks of us is to wholly rid ourselves of the natural man, as we are told in Mosiah 1, and all ungodliness associated with it. When we completely surrender ourselves to the Lord, then He will cause a mighty change in us, and we’ll become a new person. What does it say in Mosiah 3? Justified, sanctified, and born again with His image in our countenance. Are you prepared to allow your mind and your heart to be transformed so you’re able to have that image in your countenance? The Apostle Paul made a clear distinction between the two different minds we can have. One being the spiritual mind, the second being the fleshly mind. Romans 8:5-7, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity (hatred, hostility) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” It’s impossible to say we have a spiritual mind and continue to live after the fleshly mind. Impossible! It’s clear there needs to be a distinctive difference, and we can call this the “before and the after” when we experience God’s saving power in our lives.

The questions we have before us right now are these: Why do I still live or think as I used to before I was born again? Why do I struggle with the same issues as I used to? Why do I sin? Why can’t I overcome and succeed in life? To be spiritually minded is to view and evaluate our experiences in terms of the enlarged perspective of all of eternity. Each of us has a personal lens with which we view the world and all things that happen. Our lens gives its special tint to everything we see. It can suppress some features of the things that we look at, and it can enlarge others. It can also reveal things otherwise invisible. And through the lens of spirituality, it says in 1 Corinthians 2:11, we can know the things of God by the Spirit of God. As the Apostle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 2:14, such
things are foolishness to the natural man. He cannot see them because they are spiritually discerned. You can’t have those types of experiences if your mind and your heart have not been transformed. As we worship together, we seek after the same God. We want these types of experiences so that God can lead us through this part of our life and we’re able to put off the natural man and able to spiritually discern those things from heaven.

How we interpret our experiences is also a function of our degree of spirituality. Some interpret mortality solely in terms of all the worldly accomplishments and possessions they make or have or get. In contrast, we who have a testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should interpret our experience in terms of the knowledge of the purpose and life, the mission of our Savior, and the eternal destiny of the children of God. Spirituality is not a function or an occupation or a calling. Spirituality is determined by personal outlook and priorities. It is evident in our words and our actions.

In Christianity today, we have taken many folks through this process of the renewing of the minds but not in the transforming of their hearts. The Church has labored over the years to bring sound teaching and empower Christians to experience freedom from the works of all those things that are fleshly and that come from our mind. Yet we as a church have failed to bring followers this experiential firsthand encounter that transforms the heart so the mind then can be set in the Spirit.

Many followers of Christ are not suffering from matters of the mind, but they are suffering from heart problems. The heart and mind are very close to each other in their interactions. Jeremiah 17:9-10, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” We can see that it is both the mind and heart that need redemption and transformation. God has not only made a promise for our minds to be renewed but also for our hearts to be transformed.

Hebrews 8:10, “…I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” The same finger which wrote the law of Moses and tablets of stone can write the law in our minds and our hearts in the house of the Lord. To put a little more icing on this thought, let’s go to this prophecy in Ezekiel 11:19-20, talking about the latter day, “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; That they may walk in my statues, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” We must sequester ourselves of this by first allowing His presence to transform our hearts so our minds can be set in life and peace, following after Him.

Let’s talk about our hearts. How important is our heart? Could the condition of our heart determine the condition on our life? Yes. The physical heart is a marvelous creation God has given us, but in addition to the physical heart, each of us also has a spiritual heart. What is the heart from a spiritual perspective? Just as a reliable physical heart is needed to provide nourishment to our physical bodies, a reliable spiritual heart is needed to provide nourishment to our spirits. You cannot read the scriptures without realizing the heart means several things. For example, John 14:1, when Jesus said to the disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled…,” it is a clear indication that the heart is the center of emotion. When Jesus said to the Pharisees in Mark 2:7, “Why reason ye these things in your hearts?” He is saying, “Why do you questioning these things in your hearts?” It is a clear indication to me that the heart is also the center of our intellect. In Daniel 1:8, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the food of the king. 1 Nephi 7:32, “For behold, saith the prophet, The time cometh speedily, that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men.” These two scriptures give a clear indication that the heart is the seat of our will.

When the scriptures talk about the heart, it means the master control switch. It’s our whole being. It speaks to the command center of all the things that happen in our lives, not just the little organ that pumps blood throughout your body. No wonder Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Psalms
51, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Why? Because the heart in the scriptures is the master control switch, and it becomes the very heart of our trouble. Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Meaning sick. Jesus, the Lord himself, says in Matthew 15:18, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

There is an old story that tells of a big clock in front of a church, and it was always running slow. The minister decided to put a big sign right on top of the clock that read, “Don’t blame my hands, the trouble lies deeper.” With all of our problems, we often look at our hands, our extremities. We look at all the eternal things, at the outside appearances, the surrounding circumstances, the things that brought us to this place, when the problem is usually deeper within us. So, let’s be clear, our spiritual heart draws us closer to our heavenly Father. It prompts us to serve and to love each other as He has asked and requires of us. It burns with faith and testimony and protects us against sin and gives strength and hope in times of trial.

In the Old Testament following the spiritual fall of King Saul, Samuel the prophet was led to the house of Jessie in his search for Israel’s new king. As he looked over each of Jessie’s sons, the Lord taught Samuel this, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature;…for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearances, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7.) Young David, although not as physically impressive or accomplished as his older brothers, was chosen by the Lord to be king because of the state of his heart. The scripture explains that David, in 1 Samuel 16:12-13, had a beautiful countenance and that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. In the Book of Mormon, Alma 12:110, we read of Ammon teaching the Lamanite king, Lamoni, about the nature and character of God. He explains that God “…looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart.” God knows our heart. He knows our thoughts, feelings, desires, intent, and struggles, and He understands our strivings.

Our heart is more important and vital than we ever give it credit for. Physically, it pumps life into every organ of our body. Spiritually, it does the same to every area of our life. The most vital and central part of the success of every person is found in our heart. Jesus stated that the fruit of life comes from the heart. Proverbs 4:23 in the Complete Jewish Bible says, “Above everything else guard your heart for it is the source of life consequences.” The areas where you have seen death and destruction in your life might not be the result of just your mindset, it may be coming from your heart. The areas where you have seen success, healing, restoration, peace, and life are a result of a healthy heart and mind. Section 64:4d, “…I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men.”

Luke 6:45, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good. And an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Jesus here expresses two different kinds or conditions of the heart. One heart has good treasure, and the other heart has evil treasure. The heart with the good treasure is the heart that has been transformed. It has been redeemed, turned from stone to flesh. But the heart that has evil treasure is a heart that has become hard and filled with things of the world and sin. If Jesus were to evaluate your heart right now, at this moment, what condition would He find it in?

Let’s talk about good treasure. These are the virtues that come when our heart is transformed: peace and life and kindness, self-control, and love for Him and others, obedience, righteousness. This type of heart has the desire and ability to surrender and submit to God, His will, and His purposes. What is an evil treasure? Unbelief, easily wounded, becomes offended, unable to forgive, selfish, pride, ambition, competition, unable to surrender and submit to God, His will, and His purposes.

We have to start examining our hearts because we have been asked to be transformed. We have to do this so the fruit might come forth. Do you realize that our heart reveals our true conditions? We live and reflect the true conditions of our heart above everything else. So often we build walls of preservation around us so others may not come in on us or toward us. It only reveals to us that the heart is wounded and hurt. When we lash out...
in anger, it shows we have deep hurts and need healing. When we refuse to follow directions or instructions from leaders and ministers of the Gospel, it reveals that we have a heart that is rebellious. Maybe we feel rejected, causing us to protect ourselves from further rejection. If we are proud, it means our heart has been filled with pride and arrogance. Our heart reveals and reflects our true identity. We have Christ’s identity, which is humble, kind, and compassionate, hating evil and the works of the enemy. A heart that is easily hurt, wounded, and offended, is a heart that has not experienced the transforming power of Christ.

David cried out to God, Psalms 51:10-12, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” As we continue the examination of our hearts, we must realize that in His presence, we truly experience freedom from the matters of the heart that we have carried for many years. You can experience the transforming power of God in a very supernatural way, even in your heart right now. But you first have to identify your conditions. You have to realize you need a heart transformation. There is nothing wrong with memorizing scripture, with making statements by professing our faith and proclaiming our victories. But what if the key is in your heart? If you have not obtained your break-through or you have had cycles of defeat, it’s time to take a look at the root issues.

We need to transform our hearts so we are prepared to receive this fruit. When the Lord measures an individual, He does not take a tape measure to them and put it around their head to determine their mental capacity or around their chest to determine their manliness, but He measures the heart. He measures the heart as an indicator of the person’s capacity and potential to bless others. Why the heart? Because the heart is a synonym for one’s entire make up. It’s the master control switch.

We often use phrases about the heart to describe the total person. We describe the person as being big-hearted, good-hearted, or having a heart of gold. Or we speak of people with faint hearts, wise hearts, pure hearts, willing hearts, deceitful hearts, conniving hearts, courageous hearts, cold hearts, hearts of stone, and selfish hearts. The measure of our heart is the measure of our total performance. As used by the Lord, the heart of a person describes our efforts to better ourselves or others or to live the conditions He confronts. God wants our heart.

How do you measure up? Ultimately, we will be judged not only for our actions but also for the desires of our heart. Does that convince you now that we need a transformation of our heart? That He is able to judge us on our desires? This truth was revealed to Joseph Smith when he saw his deceased brother, Alvin, who had died before the gospel was restored, in the celestial kingdom. Joseph received this great truth: “All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God. For I the Lord will judge all men according to their works according to the desire of their hearts” (CH Vol II.)

If our works and our hearts desires are the ultimate criteria of our character, how do we measure up? What kind of heart should we seek? For what kind of heart should we pray? Remember, our heart is the center of our actions and our true motives. It’s the master control switch. True godliness and heart transformations are obtained by the supernatural grace of God, our Heavenly Father, causing us to be transformed more into His heart, which has no selfishness. His heart has no pride, no disobedience, no love for money, no ungratefulness, no dishonor, and the list continues.

Every dispensation has perilous times, but our day will include genuine peril. D&C 45 tells us that the whole earth will be in commotion. 2 Timothy 3:2-5 describes the deplorable condition of men in this day. If we don’t transform our hearts, we might be a part of that people we have to avoid. So, we need to get to the root of our problem. God never intended for us to live in defeat and sin.

Jeremiah says, the heart is deceitful and sick. Genesis 8:10, “And God saw that the wickedness of man had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart; being only evil continually.” God’s heart
is grieved when every intention of the thoughts of our heart is evil—when our heart is not reflecting His heart. We haven’t been fully transformed. He saw that man had disconnected from His heart and in their own efforts had tried to fix what only He can transform. There is no human power that can change our hearts. Only through the supernatural encounter with Jesus Christ can we fully experience a transformation of our heart.

Let me suggest four questions that might help us determine how we measure up and how to move toward this transformation. First question: How honest in heart am I? Mosiah 3:3 describes the conversion experience each of us needs as, “…a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” The Book of Mormon is a study of interesting contrasts between those who hardened their hearts and those whose hearts were softened by the Spirit of the Lord. How does one have his or her heart soften under the influence of this Spirit, the Holy Ghost? I believe Nephi’s testimony provides an answer in 1 Nephi 1:47-48, “…having great desire to know of the mysteries of God, Wherefore I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father.”

Second question: Do I have a willing heart? D&C 64:7a instructs us this way, “Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.” It doesn’t say the Lord requires competence, a Ph.D., to make sure your house is immaculately clean, or to have professional success. It also doesn’t say He will be satisfied with a half-hearted heart. He wants our whole heart. And for good reason. Real power does not lie in external forces, but it lies in our heart. A willing heart describes one who desires to please the Lord and to serve His causes first. He serves the Lord on the Lord’s terms, not on his own, and there are no restrictions to where or how he will serve. What does the Lord require for service? A willing heart and an intense desire.

Third question: Do I have an understanding heart? An understanding, loving heart is the pinnacle of all human emotions. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul shares, “Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” We come closest to becoming Christlike when we are charitable and understanding of others. Why is charity so vital? Simply because it is the ultimate solution. There is no problem in the world or in any human heart that could not be directly or indirectly solved by exercising charity. The power and magnitude of that love is a greater factor and force than anything that exists.

Fourth question: Alma proclaimed this, “If ye have experienced a change of heart and if you have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, can you feel so now?” No amount of self-will, effort, or work can transform our heart. Having a change of heart at one time in our lives is inadequate. If you tell me, “Larry, I accepted Christ when I was eight years old. I’m now fifty, and that happened way back then, and it’s been enough to live my life up to this point,” I’d tell you that you’re not living in the full Spirit that God wants you to be in. It’s inadequate, totally lacking. Christlike love must be continuous and contemporary.

Let me finish with this little story: One night a young idealist had this dream. He dreamed there was a new store in a nearby shopping mall. He went in and saw an angel behind the counter, and he began to become very nervous. He asked what the shop sold, and the angel replied to him saying, “Everything your heart desires.” Then the young man said, “Then I want peace on earth. I want an end to famine and sorrow and disease.” “Just a moment,” the angel said. “You haven’t understood! We don’t sell fruit here. Only seeds.”

D&C 43:8b, “Treasure these things up in your heart, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.” That’s some soberness right there, to let the solemnities of eternity rest upon our mind.

I pray that God will give each of us the courage and desire to strive for a pure heart, a willing heart, an understanding heart, a loving heart. May we take the seeds that are offered to all of us and plant and nourish them, that we may help harvest the matured fruit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.
By now, many of you have heard of FSM and that the elders in conference unanimously approved this program. What you might not know is how it originated. About five years ago, there was a combined branch retreat where four branches in the Center Place received a message that we needed to come out of debt.

At the same time, the Lord was working with Shaun Turner in Michigan and Bob Dickson in Texas, expressing the same thing to them. He also let them know that they needed to gather their families to the Center Place. Not knowing each other, both gathered in late August 2018 within one week of one another.

Shaun went with five others and myself to Kirtland in September 2018, and we had a wonderful experience. On the way home, we all started talking about how we could assist the Saints in coming out of debt. Generally, when we talk of Zion, we inevitably get to all things common and total consecration. This time was different. We talked about stewardship. How much does each one of us just blow each month? Some in the van were very good stewards, on a fixed income, and said they probably do not blow $25 a month. Others said they might spend $100-$200 extra a month, and one even said they might spend an extra $400!

Then our conversation moved to: “Of the money you just blow each month, how much of that would you be willing to contribute to helping a brother or sister come out of bondage?” We had just been instructed to bind ourselves together at the priesthood retreat, and this seemed like a good start, even a baby step toward Zion.

We suddenly realized that if all of the families in a congregation that were not in debt would look at it this way, very easily $1,000 could be gathered each month. Then, if just ten congregations would get behind this, we could have $10,000 a month. Naturally, these are just average and hypothetical numbers. Branch sizes, as well as the number of those debt-free in the congregation, would drive this number. Shaun and I started visiting with Bob, who is a retired banker and his father was a bishop in the church. FSM was starting to take shape.

What we realized was that high-interest consumer debt was killing our families, not to mention causing the Church to lack financially because of the burden that has been placed on the membership. The model developed allows us to pay off high-interest credit card debt and allows the people participating to repay that amount at zero-percent interest.

I received a call one day and was told this person had heard about FSM. They felt so excited about it that they wanted to match 50¢ on the dollar up to $25,000 toward this project, so if we raised $50,000, it would actually be $75,000! Again, $50,000 would only be twenty people or branches coming up with $2,500 each.

After several meetings and much prayer, we finally crafted something to present to the elders in June 2019, and it was approved unanimously. Shortly thereafter, my home congregation approved it.

After church that day, I was driving home, very excited about the progress and what was happening. I could see families coming out of debt. I saw stress reduced on marriages and, in some cases, even saving marriages. I saw us becoming better stewards. Suddenly, God
spoke to my mind and said, “Brian, your vision for FSM pales in comparison to my vision for it.” I questioned why. In my infinite wisdom, I shared MY vision for FSM (as if He didn’t already know.) When I finished, He said, “You are looking only at the fruit: people getting out of debt, less stress, better stewards, and even saving marriages. Brian, this is THE FIRST STEP TOWARD ZION!”

All of a sudden, I realized there was so much more to this! This would give us an opportunity to function as a body and not just as individual branches. I would be as concerned about a family in your branch as I was my own. If one family in a branch is struggling, then the body is not whole or complete! I also realized we would be able to educate our people and teach them to live within their budget.

We have been making presentations to branches and signing up branches to participate in this program. Due to the education component and the goals the Lord has set before us, this is a branch-based program and not an individual-based program. We need branches to affiliate so that the structure and policies can be finalized and we can move forward. We have already begun having classes and receiving funds, but we will not be paying off any debts until a board and policies are formed and ratified by the member branches.

Please contact us if you have any questions or if you would like a presentation given to your branch. This is not just for the Center Place. Two branches outside of Missouri have already become affiliate branches. Please contact any of the following if you have any questions, or if we can assist you in any way:

Bob Dickson  816-274-1340
Brian Mundy  816-668-4521
Shaun Turner  816-982-2901

“Behold, this is the way, that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints; that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low; for the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.”
D&C 101:2 e–f

In the above scripture, our Lord has made it clear that He has provided everything in abundance for His saints. Our calling as stewards is to see that this abundance is spread throughout His Kingdom so that all live in sufficiency. This simple principle of stewardship is the calling of Freedom Stewardship Ministries (FSM). The Lord reached out to a number of us two years ago to do what we can do to help the Church of Jesus Christ see the immediacy of this need. Freedom Stewardship Ministries was born in recognition of this calling and in recognition that there need not be poor among us who struggle day to day for necessary living expenses. To those who have abundance, the call is to provide out of that abundance to those in need.

Brothers Shaun Turner, Joe Burkhard, and I have made presentations to fourteen congregations about the concepts behind FSM. The simple message is that we need congregations in Zion and beyond to join in our efforts to provide stewardship education to all who are willing to listen. The education portion of the ministry is the teaching of the law of stewardship to include family budgeting and extinguishment of consumer debt. The goal is to assist our families in getting themselves out of the burden of debt to their “enemies.” The society in which we all live in these latter days seems to have blurred the difference between just needs and wants. While the Lord may not desire that we should have everything that we may “want,”
He has clearly indicated that He has provided the abundance so that everyone may have access to their “needs.”

FSM has engaged in information presentations to many of our congregations regarding the initial design of the ministry. At this point, we are waiting for the Saints to find it in their hearts to join us in this effort. All we are asking is that congregations prayerfully consider the goals of FSM. If their memberships find themselves aligned with our plans to provide stewardship education and ultimately help in refinancing the consumer debt, we are asking only that they vote to endorse the program. **Endorsement of the program simply means the congregation is willing to allow us access to provide the needed education to members in their branch who need one-on-one assistance. No congregation is ever under any obligation to provide financial support.** It is our hope that the membership who finds abundance in their lives will share some of that abundance so all may benefit.

At this point in time, two congregations have officially endorsed FSM. Congregational training has been provided to membership in Living Hope Restoration Branch and will shortly be offered to Missionary Branch. We are presently waiting for three more congregations to vote their endorsement, and we will move to begin offering debt refinancing to those members who are recommended for assistance by their pastors. Debt refinancing will be provided at zero interest so families can move quickly to become debt free!

We are also working to gather funds so we will be ready to provide refinancing when the time comes. Any donations can now be made to the Conference of Restoration Elders / P.O. Box 4085 / Independence, MO. 64051. Please note in the memo line of your check that the funds are for FSM. If you are making a cash donation(s), please indicate your name and address so Ray Lane can send you a statement at the end of the year.

God bless you as you consider this ministry. Please call or text Bob Dickson at (816) 274-1340 or email bobdickson3123@yahoo.com if we can visit your congregation for an informational meeting. We will make ourselves available at any time.

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**06/26/19 Reunion sermon at Waldo Restoration Branch**

**Elder Brian Herren**
Salem, Oregon

You can watch/listen to this sermon at https://livestream.com/WaldoAvenue/events/8730478

Today, the theme of reunion is “Transformation Through Stewardship.” Stewardship often allows us to speak to our material response to the Lord Jesus Christ about our finances, but I’m hoping the Spirit will open our hearts that we might consider our stewardship a little more broadly than that. Stewardship is not simply a principle or a law to be honored. It is the relationship between man and God, through which all principles and laws can be rightly viewed. It is the living testimony of Jesus Christ in us, that we belong to someone, to something greater than we can see with our mortal eyes, a Kingdom that is higher than the kingdoms which we know upon this earth. That we belong to the Lord. This places obligations upon all of those things over which we presently have power. We will be accountable for the careful and responsible management of all that is entrusted to our care. In I Corinthians 6:19, Paul exclaims, “What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s,” meaning that our body and even our spirit belong to God. He has loved us and desired us so much that He has paid the price.

And even those who have nothing have much. Even those who are small children amongst us have a stewardship. They have a stewardship of their words, their thoughts, their deeds, over the beds in which they sleep and the books which they keep. In Mosiah 2:49, King Benjamin admonishes, “…if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe to keep..."
the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish.” And so, we understand that we have a stewardship over our thoughts—a power and a responsibility over those thoughts, over our words and our deeds—and we ought to keep the commandments of God and glorify Him.

We serve the living God. He is holy. He is sovereign and righteous. No man upon this earth is His equal. If we were to take from amongst us those who are most wise, experienced, and faithful, still none are equal to our Heavenly Father. If we were to take from amongst the nations the strongest of our armies and set them before the Lord, still they are as dust in His hand. No mother loves so deeply as our Father in heaven loves us. No father sees so clearly our present need as does our Father in heaven. All things were created to bear record of God. Any object, either physical or otherwise, which does not bear record of our Father in heaven is used in direct opposition to the purpose for which it was created. And all things that are used to bear record of God our Father do fulfill the measure of our creation.

In Genesis 6:66, we read about the purpose of God’s created impress—that everything was created to bear record of our Father in heaven. We can read more specifically about our creation and that end to which we were created in Jacob 2:27-28: “And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust; and for the self-same end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments, and glorify him for ever.” We were made to bear record of our Father, to keep His commandments, and to glorify Him. God has shown us such great kindness, and I have hope in this life and in the life to come because God is kindly disposed toward each of us, even the least worthy of us. In Isaiah 49:14-16, God reveals unto us that a woman would forget her own child before He will forsake us. We are always before Him, and we are engraven upon the palms of His hands.

The evidence of God’s kindness is numerous, and even in the most physical ways, He has supplied for our needs and shared with us all of His creation. In D&C 59, beginning in 4b: “Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this the fullness of the earth is yours...” Consider what He has given into our hands. Consider what He has entrusted to our care. Consider His heart in so giving. “…the fullness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the fields, and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees, and walketh upon the earth; yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards; yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye, and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body, and to enliven the soul.” God has given all of these things into our care and our keeping and not only to sustain us but that we might have joy for the senses—for the taste and for the smell—to enliven the soul. “And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made, to be used with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion: and in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.”

These are His possessions. These belong to Him. I know He owes me nothing—not even a whisper from the heavens. But He has given us everything, not even sparing His Only Begotten Son. Stewardship has a lot to do with the way we use these things. We learn at a young age to exercise wisdom in these resources. But we’re not perfect, and sometimes, we learn with some trial and some difficulty. I remember experimenting with fire and making bad decisions while growing up with my younger brother, but it wasn’t the fire that was bad. It was how we used the fire. We might have concluded, “Well, no man should ever have fire, then, if this is what could happen as a result of fire.” But it wasn’t that no man should ever have fire; it was that our use of that fire was not yet refined. It was foolish and costly. As children, we had that trouble in developing our understanding of the resources which we had access to. We have that trouble as adults. We have placed in our hands this rod of iron, this sword of the Spirit. Have you ever seen this rod of iron misused? Have you ever seen the Word of God used in a way that it was never
intended, to beat a man down and break his back, to cause him much grief and sorrow, heaviness, and shame? To turn him away from all that God has for him? But this rod of iron was never intended to break a man’s back. It was intended to be used in pulling men from the pit.

Stewardship has a lot to do with how we use the resources with which we’ve been entrusted. How do we use that which is before us? In so many cases, that which is unclean is made unclean through immoral use or disuse. Is a grape good or bad? Well, a lot of our answers might originate in whether we like grapes or not. In the Church, isn’t that how we answer a lot of questions regarding the morality of the resources before us? If we like it, it is good, and if we don’t like it, it is bad. If the grape isn’t a good example, what about a cell phone? Good or bad? I would suggest it has a lot to do with how you use it. From a grape, men may make wine, become drunken, and enter into terrible sin and abominations in their drunkenness. But from the same grape, men may make communion wine—grape juice—and remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. One use is very bad, but one use is very good. So whether this grape is good or evil depends on how we choose to use this grape. So it is with the resources at our disposal.

A good steward is one who uses the Lord’s resources to accomplish the Lord’s purpose. If it is not a grape, it may be medicine, technology, electricity, exploration, media, poetry, songs, time, precepts, principles, thoughts, and even this life itself. A good steward is not one who abstains from all things that might be used for good or evil. A good steward is one who uses everything at his disposal for the building of the Kingdom, to glorify God, to spread the Gospel, to do good. A good steward looks at that grape and says, “How can I use this to glorify my Father in heaven?” They arise in the morning and ask, “What can I use this body for today—this spirit, this soul—to build the Kingdom? How can I use this day to accomplish God’s will?” This is the day that the Lord has made…and the grape…and this body…and this spirit…and everything before us. What is left for us to decide is how we will use it, and that will determine whether we bring about that which is good or that which is evil.

Jesus Christ gives meaning to everything, and in Him, everything finds meaning and usefulness. It is the revelation of Christ upon which we build. It is that revelation of Jesus Christ which has the power to transform us. We have a tendency, when we need transformation, to look very deeply upon ourselves, when in fact, the only power by which we can be rightly transformed will require that we not look more deeply upon ourselves, but that we look upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You keep your eye single to keep your focus. When you lose control is when you remove your eye from the goal to which you hope you might achieve. When you begin to pay attention to those things which are around you, to focus on those things which are beyond your control and out of control rather than those few things that we do have control of, that’s when we lose our vision and our direction.

We want to use that which is at our disposal for the right purpose. We want to use it for that which it was made. This begins with our lives. Every life. This begins with the life of every man, woman, and child. We read in Genesis 6:66 that we were made to bear record of God. We read in Jacob 2 that the very end for which we were made and created was to glorify God. Think about the times in your life when you’ve been happy. Those have been times in which you were found glorifying God. At the campfire when you were singing hymns to your heavenly Father. At prayer service when you were testifying of Him. In the mission field when you were teaching of Him. Those times when you felt satisfied and fulfilled were times when you were glorifying God, because we were made to glorify Him. We were made to love Him. We were created for that purpose of keeping His commandments. Our lives are for the glory of God. You’ll say, “No, Brian, men are that they might have joy.” This is joy, and there is no other joy than to glorify our Father in heaven. It is the only thing that lasts. It is the pure love of Jesus Christ, the only thing that will never fail.

We have stewardship over all things, and of course, that includes our monies. It also includes our stewardship of the Gospel, of our time upon
this earth, of the missions, of the Church, of our children. We have a stewardship over the bonds that unite us, that bind us and yoke us together. We have a stewardship over all of these things.

I’d like to share a testimony of a dream I had on February 22, 2018. It was chastening to me. On that evening, I had retired as normal and fallen asleep, but shortly after I fell asleep, I was awakened. In this dream, I was met by a man more gentle and kind than any man I had ever known. He wanted to show me my flocks, and he bade me come. I left my bed and followed him out to where I had been keeping eleven hens. Only, there were not just eleven hens, but there were dozens and dozens of birds. They weren’t just the chickens I had ordinarily kept, but they were beautiful birds—pheasants, doves, peacocks, guinea hens, and all manner of exotic and beautiful birds. And I noticed something. This is something I would notice—there were no roosters. But these birds were laying eggs. I marveled at the beauty of this flock because I had just been keeping eleven simple hens, and here in their stead was a multitude of the most exquisite and beautiful birds. After a time, I was allowed to return to my bed. I did, and in this dream, I fell asleep once more. After a short time, I was awakened again, and this same man, most gentle and kind, bade me come again. I followed him, and what I saw, in the place where those birds had been and still were, were eggs that were hatching. Those little birds were just as beautiful and exquisite as their mothers. As I watched these eggs hatch, the thought came upon my heart, “But there are no roosters.” Just as soon as I thought that upon my heart, the man spoke to me. He said, “The Lord has multiplied thy flocks. Open the gates.” I thought upon my heart, “If I open the gates, all of this increase will be lost.” I didn’t think this because I wanted to be rebellious or I didn’t trust this man. It was just a thought that came upon my heart. As soon as I thought that thought, the man said, “Be free with thy substance.”

We certainly have a stewardship of our finances. In the Old Testament, there was a time when the people gave freely. There were many times in the Old Testament when gifts were given by obligation, when they were given by prescription, by commandment, because they were forced. But there was a time when the children of Israel gave freely of a willing heart. It was for the building of the tabernacle. In Exodus 35, Moses gave the commandment to bring their possessions, and “they came, every one whose heart stirred him.” That was their motivation. “...The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.”

Moses called upon the craftsmen of the day to receive these resources and to fashion them in a way that would be productive in the building of the tabernacle. It says Moses called “every wisehearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it; And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; and they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.” When was the last time we were told this in our congregations? “And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much” (Exodus 36:2-7.) Wouldn’t it be something if we replaced our offertory remarks with a restraint and the men said, “Brothers and sisters, you mustn’t bring anymore for there is too much here already.” Why haven’t we done this? Have we not causes so equal to the cause which they had? Have we not hearts so free as the hearts which were in them?

Stewardship of finances is important. Malachi 3 is an account of the time in which the children of Israel had wandered far from the Lord. The Lord desired a reconciliation with that people, so He
invited them to return unto Him. In verse 7, it says, “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances…” They had drifted, wandered down forbidden paths, worshipped false idols, and wandered from the ordinances. “…and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” How would this even happen? Imagine a people that had drifted so far, in so many strange paths, and had left the ordinances of the Church. God calls them back and says, “Come back to me.” They say, “Where do we even begin?” Where would they begin? Would it be baptism? Would it be the laying on of hands? The Lord said, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?” And God said, “In tithes and offerings.” Isn’t that interesting? It was the first step to their return. It was a pain to the heart of the rich young ruler. Though he had kept all the commandments from his youth, he had not given his heart.

We have a stewardship of the Gospel as well, and I might ask each of you if you’ve shared the good news. We have a choice to make. We will either bear record of the light, or we will bear record of the darkness. Isn’t it a strange matter when a man stands behind a pulpit and bears record of darkness—of things which are wrong in the world? Of sin and of heaviness? We have a choice to make, brothers and sisters. We will either bear record of the light or we will bear record of the darkness. We can preach the end times (and we should,) and we can preach the judgments of God and the wrath and the fury which await the disobedient, but if we have not shared the good news of Jesus Christ, we have not preached the Gospel. We can prophesy, and we can have tongues and interpretation of tongues, but if we are not bearing record of the light and the good news and the hope that we have in the Kingdom of God, then we have not shared the Gospel.

We’re familiar with the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. We spend time in our studies, analyzing our own lives, comparing ourselves to the soils that are offered. There was one that fell by the wayside. The birds came by and plucked it up. There was one that fell amongst the rocks. It didn’t have a depth of roots. There was one that fell amongst thorns, and the thorns grew up and overcame it. And there one that fell amongst fertile soil, and it brought forth abundantly. We analyze our own lives and compare ourselves to those different soil conditions. And we should, and it’s good. But you know what? There’s something that catches my attention, which stays with me and haunts me. It’s the hand of that sower, because he sowed in all of those places. He sowed by the wayside, and he sowed in the rocks. He sowed amongst the thorns, and he sowed in the good soil.

In that same chapter, we read about the Kingdom of Heaven being likened unto a fishing net. It is cast forth into the sea. That net is cast indiscriminately, isn’t it? We have a law in Oregon that there are particular types of fish you cannot catch. If you do catch these fish, you must release them. But the thing about fishing is, that hook is very indiscriminate, and you don’t know what you’re going to catch. Just like that net in Matthew 13 is indiscriminate, it is our responsibility to cast it and to cast it and to cast it. We drag it forth on the shore, and we let those who are charged with the separation to separate that which is good and that which is not. But as for us, we are the fishermen. It is for us to cast the net and not concern ourselves in the separation and the division of those fish. It is for us to sow the seed. And so we have a stewardship over the Gospel.

We have a stewardship of time, remembering the purpose of this life. In Genesis 6 and Jacob 2, we read about why man was created. In Alma 9 and Alma 16, we also acknowledge that we were given this period of time in which to live. We are told in Alma 9:41: “Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.” This life—this period of time—is given to us to prepare to meet God. If we are not using this creation to glorify God and to prepare to meet God, then we are not being good stewards over this time and over this life.

There is a stewardship of the missions. In Ephesians 6, Paul speaks to the armor of God. We remember
the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, being girted about with truth, having our feet shod with the preparatory Gospel, and the sword of the Spirit. But Paul did not make mention of one thing that is mentioned elsewhere. In Isaiah 59, that same armor is also mentioned, but this time, it is adorning our Lord Jesus Christ. In Isaiah, we do read about righteousness as a breastplate and in verse 17: “…and a helmet of salvation upon his head.” But we also read that “he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.” Are we zealous? Are we anxiously engaged? I don’t even really know what a cloak is. Is it a coat? Is it a coat for your horse? But whatever that cloak is—that cloak of zeal—to be anxiously engaged, to be excited, to have that burning within us…do we feel that today? Do we have that amongst the Saints? We sometimes feel we have to choose between man’s initiative and God’s will. Section 58 tells us clearly that we should do many good things of our own free will. That we should be anxiously engaged in a good cause. That it is not meet that God should command us in all things. Yet sometimes we feel we have to choose between our initiative and God’s will because we have lived so long in a state wherein those two are separate things and directly opposed to one another, when it should never be. Those things were not made to be in opposition. Our initiative and God’s will—they were made to be in harmony. And in harmony, we don’t have to choose betwixt the two because the two are one. In Acts 15, things were going well in Antioch, and Paul says, “Now let us go. Let us go and visit every branch. Let us go and visit all the peoples that we have visited.” There’s no angelic message or burning bush. It is Paul’s initiative, not separate from the will of God but made one with the will of God.

There is a stewardship of the Church. On May 2, 1842, in the Times and Seasons, two articles were published pertaining to the temple. One of them was a letter that was written by the Twelve to the Church in America. The other was an editorial written by Brother Joseph Smith. We find it in Volume 2 of Church History, page 579. Our brother Joseph said, “The cause of God is one common cause, in which all the saints are alike interested. We are all members of the one common body, and all partake of the same Spirit, and are baptized into one baptism, and possess alike the same glorious hope. The advancement of the cause of God and the building up of Zion is as much one man’s business as another. The only difference is that one is called to fulfill one duty and another to another duty; ‘but if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it,’ and if one member is honored all the rest rejoice with it, and the eye cannot say to the ear I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot I have no need of thee; party feelings, separate interests, exclusive designs should be lost sight of in the one common cause, in the interest of the whole.” We are not called to be many; we are called to be one. And when one of us suffers, all of us suffer. And when one of us triumphs, all of us triumph.

There was a presentation made today at the reunion about the Freedom Stewardship Ministries and its effort that will be made to alleviate consumer debt among the Saints. Let me tell you why you should be interested in this, because you may say within your heart, “I don’t even have any consumer debt.” But, brothers and sisters, if there is any amongst us who is in bondage to debt, then all of us are. If my brother is in debt, then I, too, am in debt. If my brother is hurting, then I, too, am hurting. If Rose in Bondi is hungry, then I am hungry. For too long, we have considered our individual branches to be separate churches. It was never meant to be so. We are one body with many branches. We are only as strong as the weakest branch, and if we design our branch to be a strong branch, we are no strong branch at all so long as others are weak. We have one common interest. We have one common mind, one common heart, which is the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. We can insulate ourselves, and we can build up these walls and say, “We are strong,” but if there are others that are weak, we are not yet strong. Because if there be one weak branch, all of us are weak.

In John 17, we read about a prayer that Christ offered on behalf of His disciples. He prayed that they be one. Do you know the example He used as unity? He used the unity between He and His Father. He said, “I pray for these, my disciples, that they might be one, even as You and I are one.” What kind of unity do you think there is between Jesus
Christ and our Heavenly Father? Do you think they just agree to disagree? That’s not the unity Christ prayed for. We will not see the blessings He has for us until we dispel that idea that we can just agree to disagree to maintain peace. Because peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is the presence of God’s Kingdom. We do not have the presence of God’s Kingdom for we do not have this unity. If my family be strong but there be another that is weak, then my family is weak too.

There is a difference in approach between managing a decline and building a kingdom. As mothers and fathers, as brothers and sisters, as pastors and priests, we must be very interested in building a kingdom and not managing a decline. There is one fundamental difference, at least, between those two approaches. It is a perfect brightness of hope.

In II Nephi 13:29, we are told we must press forward steadfastly for the love of God and the love of all men, and a perfect brightness of hope. If we are simply managing a decline and trying to slow a fall, that is not a perfect brightness of hope. There is a stewardship of this Church.

There is a stewardship of our children. We must defend the defenseless. It is not a political issue; it is a moral obligation. We must teach them in our homes that there is one way—that there is only one way to everlasting happiness, and that way is Jesus Christ. We read in Deuteronomy 6 and 11 that we should write His word upon our doorpost, that we should speak of it in our homes. That we share with our children when we rise, and that we speak of Him before we retire.

There is a stewardship of the bonds which unite us and bind us and yoke us together. I’d like to read from Section 85:38, “See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another.” Sometimes, we’ve substituted finding fault with another as righteousness itself. “Cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is a bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.”

We are to be of one heart, of one mind, we are to dwell in righteousness, and there should be no poor among us. See that you love one another. Cease to find fault one with another. Saints, I would tell you tonight to never give up. As we move from this wilderness into the promised land, never give up. Don’t give up on yourselves. Mothers, never give up on your children. And fathers, never give up on your children, no matter how far they’ve wandered. No matter how hopeless it seems, so long as there is breath in the life of a soul, there is reason for hope. Husbands, do not give up on your wives. Wives, do not give up on your husbands. Children, do not give up on your parents. Brothers and sisters, let us not give up. Let us not be afraid. That which keeps us from passing through the River Jordan and entering into that Promised Land includes fear. And we have been afraid for too long. A good soldier cannot have fear. If he has fear in his heart, he’s already lost the battle. In the Book of Mormon, we read about the Lamanites when they came up to battle against the Nephites. They saw the armor the Nephites had and were afraid in their hearts, and when they were afraid in their hearts, they were already defeated.

Do you remember a day when we used to be afraid to be apart? And now, in so many ways, it seems we’re afraid to be too much together. Let us not be afraid. Not afraid of where the truth may come from. Not afraid of the bonds into which we might be called, the fellowship. Not afraid of that which we must leave behind to embrace the Gospel. But let us be courageous. Can we be courageous again? I believe there is a reason for hope. I believe there is a testimony and a good report of the land to which we have been promised. And I believe there is a generation which will dispel these fears, unite together again, and cross that river.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form that every virtue takes at the testing point.” Today, brothers and sisters, is our testing point. Let us not be afraid. Let us go forward with conviction into that promised land.
The winter of 1986 was a particularly cold one. On some reservations, snow had come early. The people had already spent their allotment checks on food and other necessities, and next to nothing was left to buy fuel oil or firewood.

Indian Ministry volunteers were swamped with requests for help—in any form—from our Native American RLDS members and Church friends from North Dakota to Arizona, asking particularly for items for the children.

My wife, Ruth (Apache-Cherokee), and I (my blood ties to the Navajo people) understood only too well the financial difficulties the tribes faced that winter. At that particular time, we had been working with the Kickapoo Tribe near Horton, Kansas. In November, the Indian Ministry Group had been invited by the Tribal Chairman of the Kickapoo Tribe, Paul Jesseep, and the Medicine-Pipe Carrier, John Ramirez (who is also a priest in the RLDS Church), to be tribal guests at a naming ceremony for Paul’s grandson. The first part of the ceremony would be held in the Kickapoo Roundhouse.

The night we arrived for the ceremony, our group noticed that many of the children had no hats, mittens, or gloves to wear. We asked Paul about this situation, and he said this was a real problem for the parents, and the tribal office had no money to give them. The volunteers talked among themselves and agreed to try to raise enough money to help the Kickapoo children.

We told Paul Jesseep that Indian Ministries would go back to Independence and bring back what hats, mittens, and gloves we could. He then told the people what we were going to do and when we would return. He then asked a prayer that Wakan-Tanka (their name for God) would guide and protect us.

Returning to Independence, we spread the word about what we needed for the Kickapoo children and adults. Each volunteer asked their congregations to assist with this endeavor. Donations came in, along with gifts or private purchases. Then, with the money gifts we had received, which amounted to $450, we went out one night to buy what we could on the retail market.

What a shock! Children’s glove prices started at $12.00, children’s hats at $12.00, and adult glove sizes were $15.00 and up. We bought what we thought would be sufficient for the number of children we had seen in the roundhouse. With these gifts, we made ready to return to the reservation. Then another event occurred, one that would challenge our faith. Have you ever noticed that you get the test before the testimony?

Earlier in the week, we had received a telephone call from the RLDS church official in Horton. He had discovered what we were going to do for our Kickapoo friends and could we please stop at the Methodist Mission—which was just about two dozen members, maybe ten children—and give some gifts to the people? Our group felt we had enough to donate a couple dozen pairs of gloves, and we agreed to stop there. Needy children are still needy children, no matter where they live. We let Paul and John know we would be delayed.

Two weeks later found us driving into the parking lot of the Methodist Mission, where we received a very large shock. Instead of “just a few members,” the parking lot was full of cars and trucks. Someone had told the people there would be a Native American “giveaway” for everyone. Ruth and I looked at each other and said, “We are in deep trouble.”

It seemed we had overestimated the wisdom of this stop when the donations we had left to give to the Kickapoo people were down to one bag. We went to Paul’s home and explained what had happened to Paul and John. The group told them they were going back to Independence and promised they would be back to bring gifts to those who had been left out.
There was a lot of grumbling to be heard from the roundhouse, which was full of people who were also there to share in the naming ceremony. Many of the children cried. John rose to speak to the people, carrying the medicine pipe. He said, “Where is your faith in Waken-Tanka? These people are going back to try to get more for you. This may be a test by the Creator to see who are His children, who are the real believers in Him?”

Before we left the reservation, one little girl came up to us and asked if we could bring her a pair of purple gloves and a purple hat. We assured her we would. John and Paul then asked prayers for our group. John, in his prayer, asked for a miracle if it was Waken-Tonka’s will. We then returned to Independence to start work—again. The next two days found us on the telephone, asking those who had given before to give again…and they did. Many purchased items and brought them to our home.

The Restoration people were very sympathetic in their giving, but since Christmas was only a few days away, some of the volunteers were doubtful of getting donations. But as we all know, the Lord works in His marvelous ways. We did not realize He was about to create a Christmas miracle for us all. Little did we realize, until we counted the donations that had come in, we had received almost $200! We were very surprised—and thankful!

On December 21st, Ruth and I and several volunteers went out to purchase what we could. As usual, the hat-mitten-glove racks were still priced high in every store. We found ourselves at our last possibility…the old K-Mart that used to be at the intersection of Highway 40 and Noland Road in Independence. As we entered the store, it began to snow. At the hat and glove racks, the prices were still the same.

As we stood there, wondering what to do, we saw an assistant manager approaching us with a pricing tool in her hand. She walked up to the rack and began marking new prices on the items we wanted. She stopped for a minute and said to us, “This is strange. We never get telephone calls from the home office regarding pricing this late at night, and never telling us to lower the price on all items in the department down to ‘cost’?” We all stood there in shock, and then, realizing what was happening, we all began laughing and crying.

The assistant manager probably thought she had a bunch of weird shoppers on her hands, but when we explained the whole situation to her, she began to cry and said, “I’ve never been part of a Christmas present before.” She began marking prices down, and we put items in carts that were soon overflowing. Children’s gloves that were $15 before were now $2. We told the assistant manager how much money we had, and she said, “You keep on filling carts. I’ll make sure the money part is all right.” With the help of four checkers, five sackerers, and one accountant from management, we filled four industrial-sized large trash bags to overflowing. We also sang every Christmas carol we knew.

When we were leaving the store, the manager said to us, “Thank you for coming. You have brought back the real meaning of Christmas.” Ruth replied, “We have done nothing. We were just instruments in the hands of the Creator. This was His doing.” I said, “Just remember, when Christmas comes, whose birthday it is and who the Father of the child is. The Father of all of us.” The manager smiled and said, “You have made this a Merry Christmas for this whole store.”

We went back to that reservation after calling to let Paul and John know what had happened. When we arrived and opened the door of the van, one of the sacks rolled out and knocked John down. He took it inside and placed it on the ceremonial table. He then looked at the many people who had gathered and proceeded to tear the sack open, spilling the
John’s voice echoed around the building, “I told you they would be back! I told you that you worship the God of miracles! All you had to do was believe and pray for a miracle to happen. It did! How many of you now know Wakan-Tonka did this for you?” Everyone’s hand was raised.

As for that naming ceremony that started all this… Paul’s grandson was named John-Paul Jesseep. After all that had happened, that name just had to be the one that fit. And yes, that little eight-year-old Kickapoo girl got her purple hat and gloves. This is just one example of how the Creator has blessed Indian Ministry.

2019 Kirtland Priesthood Retreat

By Elder Jason Hamilton
Independence, Missouri

Priesthood from across the country gathered to Kirtland, Ohio, September 14-15, 2019, with the great desire to draw closer to their Heavenly Father. The theme for the weekend was “Look Up and Press Onward.”

Activities began Saturday morning at the Kirtland Restoration Branch with a worship led by the branch pastor, Elder Jason Webster. Jason quoted the words of Earl Curry from The Endowment, which point to a time of great trial and calamity that the people and ministry of the Church must pass through before more than Pentecostal power and blessings can be poured out. A reminder was given that we are in the refiner’s fire for a great purpose, and we will be better ready to serve the Lord because of the trials we currently face. We were encouraged to take hope in the great blessings to come. This was followed by a season of prayer where the earnest desires of the body to come into the Lord’s presence were expressed.

Following this time of worship, Seventy Richard Neill presented a class on “Becoming the Living Church.” Through the reading of scriptures and words of early RLDS leaders, it was made evident that since we worship a living God through His Son, who is the living Christ, that we, too, are to make a living, reasonable service, and we are to become the Living Church.

A portion of the class time was set apart for the body to discuss in small groups what it means to be called the Living Church. This setting allowed the men to speak candidly about the priesthood ministry currently being provided, reassess our level of commitment, and brainstorm helpful ideas and suggestions to aid in our respective callings. These moments are cherished by those in attendance as it allows the brethren to get to know each other on a more personal level.

The priesthood then reconvened for another brief session where many good thoughts were shared. It was clear that, as individuals, we have to live the Gospel and express ourselves in it. If we don’t live it, we can’t affect anyone else. If we don’t bear the testimony of Jesus in the daily life we live, how can anyone else see Him? In closing, Brother Neill encouraged us to seize the opportunity we had this weekend to approach the throne of God and get right with Him. Not for our own salvation—for us to feel better about ourselves and tell everyone back home that the Lord was with us—but for us to go to Him so that in that closer relationship
with Christ, we can become instruments for the coming forth of a people who are preparing and waiting for the Living Church to appear.

As the noon hour arrived, lunch was graciously prepared and provided by the Kirtland Branch. Thank you to the kind Saints who took time out of their busy weekend to serve the body! This period of fellowship is such a blessing. What a joy it is to renew and make new acquaintances with brothers of the faith from around the world. This year, those in attendance were blessed to meet Priest Michel Nzayisenga, who was visiting from Rwanda. During the afternoon, free time was given to allow for touring of the Kirtland Temple and other historic sites and to study, meditate, and rest. In years past, this has provided opportunities to witness in the Kirtland community, and this year was no different.

The priesthood gathered back together late Saturday afternoon for a preparation service before entering the Temple. Elder Brian Mundy presided and shared how preparation sometimes has nothing to do with words and everything to do with stillness and being in the Spirit. The opportunity was given to abide in that Spirit during the service as periods of meditation and focused prayer were interspersed between the reading of Psalms 51. Those in attendance were greatly blessed by the Lord through this humbling experience. Now unified in heart and purpose, the priesthood gathered to the Kirtland Temple for the first of two opportunities to worship inside.

For the first time in several years, this gathering was allowed to hold a sacrament service inside the Kirtland Temple. What a tremendous experience! For many, it was the first time being able to partake of the emblems inside the Temple. Elder Jay Havener officiated over the proceedings and related to the body an experience from earlier in the year when he was able to serve communion to Saints in an outlying area who had been unable to take Sacrament for six years. After seeing the tears of joy on the faces of those partaking, Brother Havenar’s heart was changed, and he was, from that point on, determined to never again take lightly the sacrifice the Lord made when He prepared for us this feast. We were challenged to always partake and serve Sacrament in that same sacred manner exhibited by these Saints.

Elder David Joyce brought the remarks following the Sacrament and read D&C 92:3e, which describes the purpose of the Temple:

“And let the lower part of the inner court be dedicated unto me for your sacrament offering, and for your preaching; and your fasting, and your praying, and the offering up your most holy desires unto me, saith your Lord.”

Each one of these items was discussed and related back to the theme of the weekend, “Look Up and Press Onward,” through the sharing of personal testimonies and the reading of scripture. Brother Joyce stated that because Christ lives, He makes us a living church as we follow His commands. We were exhorted to continue to be a church that heals, a church that nurtures, a church that forgives, a church that feeds His sheep, and a church that values the worth of every soul that gives light to the world so not one soul will be lost. Following these remarks and a brief time of sharing testimonies by the body, Patriarch Mike
Ballantyne was called upon to offer a spiritual blessing upon the body and petition the Lord on our behalf for the work we are called to do. After the closing prayer, focus was turned toward the final service that would be held the next day.

Early Sunday morning, the priesthood began to congregate outside the Lord’s House in anticipation for that which was to come. It is a marvelous experience to walk around the Temple in the light of the morning sun to meditate and pray. The men were blessed to have this moment to bask in the beauty of God’s creation and feel His peace and love.

Elder Howard Parker presided over the service and urged the body to use this time to make covenant one with another and make a commitment before the throne of God in response to what was heard and felt that weekend. All that transpired over the next two hours unfortunately cannot be contained within this brief summary, but, Saints, suffice it to say that the brethren accepted Brother Parker’s challenge. Deeper commitments were made and the holy desires of many were shared. These servants of the Most High left Kirtland reinvigorated, ready to provide ministry to those beloved souls who would be entrusted in their care.

Some may ask why the priesthood continue to assemble in Kirtland every year for a retreat. During the weekend, Elder Val Brotherton was asked to share his testimony regarding this question. Ever since Val was in college and spent time studying the endowment, he has found within himself the desire to come and be in the fellowship of his brethren at the Kirtland Temple for events such as this retreat. When naysayers questioned why he would keep going when he has never been endowed, the Lord brought to his mind the scripture from D&C 38:5c (also D&C 46:9b) which says to “...practice virtue and holiness before Me.” This year there were over ninety men in attendance who were able to “practice.” All of the priesthood are invited to plan to gather next September for another precious opportunity. May we continue to look up and press onward until we meet again.

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**Youth Council**

By Elder Shaun Turner
Independence, Missouri

Greetings to all the Saints from the Conference of Restoration Elders (CRE) Youth Council. I wanted to take the time to share with the Church at large all the wonderful initiatives that are taking place. The goal of this council is to ensure that the youth are receiving the ministry needed to endure the days that lie ahead and provide opportunities where they can come together in fellowship and build the ties that bind.

The Youth Council is made up of the following six subcommittees:

- **Youth Activities Committee** – Organize Church-wide activities, retreats, and camps.
- **Training Committee** – Set up training and training programs for campfires, camps, retreats, and activities.
- **Electronic and Social Media Committee** – Connect Church youth through online technology and social media.
- **Staffing Pool Committee** – Help locate and create a directory of human resources to assist camp/retreat directors in staffing their events.
- **Public Relations Committee** - Assist the Education Council and ensure that the Church is aware of resources to assist in educating the youth about the Living Church of Jesus Christ.
- **Older Youth Committee** – Reaching out to the older youth and getting them engaged in the work of the Church.
We are currently working with the Education Council to provide a robust and consistent curriculum that can be adopted by the Church at large. It is important that our youth receive the same message, regardless of whether they attend a branch in Washington State or Florida. It is our goal to compile a list of materials and resources that are necessary to accomplish this goal, for all the branches of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Retreats and camps are great opportunities to provide fellowship and friendships that last. The problem with these events is that they are limited to regions. If we are going to broadcast that we are “One Church” in Jesus Christ, then we need to create opportunities where the youth can come together for a long weekend and meet Saints from different parts of the country or even the world. These events may be limited in frequency due to how widespread the Saints are to one another, but this should not hinder our desire to provide this ministry.

Currently, we are exploring a historical trip to Nauvoo for our youth in the Spring of 2020. The retreat will be for ages twelve to eighteen years old, and we will ensure that our guides are well-versed in Church History during the Nauvoo Period. Lodging and meals are being planned, so please stay tuned as more information is forthcoming.

If you are interested in any of the initiatives listed above or you would like to get involved with the Youth Council, please email Shaun Turner at shaun.cell74@gmail.com.

YMC Testimony

By Elder Jeff Anger
Independence, Missouri

In the spring of 1993, a few friends and I were invited to some meetings to discuss a youth missionary idea. I still remember, over twenty-five years later, deciding to break the bonds of societal expectations and agreeing to push pause on normal life to join the newly forming Youth Missionary Corps. Aaron Bailey and I left in August of that year to spend nine months serving the Saints on the East Coast, primarily based in New Jersey. We were blessed to spend that time under the supervision of Seventy Richard Neill. The time was such a blessing in my life. Not only were we able to minister to Saints from Maine to Florida, but my personal knowledge of the Gospel and Church grew as well. For a young man of nineteen, it was a great opportunity to meet Saints from around the country. We visited Saints in at least seven states near the Atlantic Coast. I still treasure that time and the testimonies from that year of service.

Interested young men out of high school are encouraged to apply. Please contact Tom Mitchell at mitchell@ucmo.edu for more information or apply online at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YMC-ApplicationForm.

And then shall be brought to pass that which is written, Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for naught; and ye shall be redeemed without money. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak. And then shall they say, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! — 3 Nephi 9:74-78
Announcements

ADDRESS CHANGES
Please notify the CRE of any changes in your mailing address, phone number, email address, church or marital status, etc. All contact information is on the inside front cover of each Tidings of Zion.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
There is a great need for additional help in funding the Tidings of Zion. Tidings of Zion currently goes into 4400 homes around the world, including 48 states of the USA, as well as Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, the Philippines, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

Financial Assistance Needed for Africa

By Elder Brian Mundy

For the last twenty-four years, ARM (African Restoration Ministries) has been spreading the gospel, establishing branches, and developing priesthood and leadership in Africa. We then assist that leadership to grow the Church, numerically as well as spiritually. We originally were just in Kenya and Nigeria, but now we are also in Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Congo. We just finished a Pan-African Priesthood Retreat where seven countries were represented. Currently, we are approaching six thousand church members in Africa. Now that these areas are nearly all organized, ARM is in more of a supporting and developing role.

So many people assist ARM through many projects, including education, solar lights, etc. However, right now we are really in need of unrestricted general funds that can assist the local budgets in these countries as they organize retreats and take care of their oblation needs, as well as the missionary travel expenses of their priesthood.

If you have resources you could spare, please send your tax-deductible contribution to the following address:

ARM c/o Brian Mundy
20509 E. Courtney Atherton Rd.
Independence, MO 64058

You can certainly also send it to the CRE (Conference of Restoration Elders) post office box. Between now and April 2020, we are hoping to raise a minimum of $12,000.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Brian Mundy at (816) 668-4521. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

SHARE WITH US!
Please send your articles, testimonies, branch news, youth activities, regional events, etc. Send to the CRE c/o Publication Council. Contact information is on the inside front cover of each Tidings of Zion.

LIVE STREAMING of SERVICES:
Belton, MO RB sermon.net/beltonrestorationbranch
Buckner, MO RB www.bucknerrb.org
Central Florida RB centralfloridarestoration.com
Garden City, MI RB gardencityrestorationbranch.org
Oak Grove, MO RB www.ogrb.org/video.html
Oakwood, MI RB www.oakwoodrestorationbranch.org/mobile.html
Waldo Avenue RB www.waldaavenuerestorationbranch.org

NOTICE: THE CRE OFFICE HAS BEEN MOVED
TO 1551 N. COURTNEY ROAD
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI 64050.
The mailing address is still the same, however:
PO Box 4085, Independence, MO 64051.
This is 3-4 miles north of CPRS/Waldo via Liberty St. and Kentucky Road.
CONTACT VIM HORN OR RICHARD NEILL
FOR MORE INFORMATION.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CENTRAL MISSOURI 2020 SPRING YOUTH RETREATS
at Odessa Hills Campgrounds, Odessa, MO  Theme: “The Rod of Iron” I Nephi 2:69
All retreats start at 7:00p.m. on Friday and conclude at 1:00p.m. on Sunday,
except Junior Retreat which will start at 9:00a.m. at Saturday and conclude at 1:00p.m. Sunday.

March 6-8  Senior High (grades 10-12)  Directors: Jeff & Shelly Morrison
March 13-15  Junior High (grades 7-9)
March 20-22  Older Youth (college age)  Directors: Sean & Rachel O’Keef
March 28-29  Juniors (grades 4-6)  Directors: Jared & Katie Mulheron

OHIO/WEST VIRGINIA
April 25-26  Kirtland Area Restoration Family Retreat at Kirtland, OH Restoration Branch Come Fellowship with the Saints as we tour church history sites on Saturday and have a Sacrament service in the Temple on Sunday. All meals will be provided at the Kirtland Restoration Branch.
Contact: Renee Webster for details. (440) 622-5837

June 6-7  Kirtland Area Restoration Family Retreat at Lima, OH Restoration Branch Contact: Sean Telljohann

PACIFIC NORTHWEST
April 24-26  Women’s Retreat
May 15-17  Men’s Retreat
June 12-14  Pacific Northwest Summer Preaching Series
Sept 18-20  Priesthood Retreat

MISSOURI
February 1  Women’s Winter Luncheon
April 18  Women’s Spring Luncheon
September 19-20  Women’s Fall Retreat at Odessa Hills Campground
September 26-27  CRE Kirtland Priesthood Trip

2020 Restoration Camps
Grades are for the upcoming school year.

IOWA
June 14-20  JR&SR High Camp Bethel, Little Sioux, Iowa  Directors: Dave & Karen Hamblen 402-659-8211
July 5-9  Junior Camp Emmanuel, Little Sioux, Iowa  Director: Gina Birdsall 712-456-2048

MISSOURI
CENTRAL MISSOURI RESTORATION BRANCHES CAMPS
ODESSA HILLS, MISSOURI  “The Straight and Narrow Path” II Nephi 15:10
Go to www.odessahills.com for more information. Register early for a discount.

May 17-23  Older Youth (College age/unmarried)  Directors: Jared & Katie Mulheron
May 31 - June 4  Junior Camp (Grades 3-7)  Directors: Jared & Katie Mulheron
June 14-20  SR High Camp (Grades 10-12)  Directors: Jeff & Shelly Morrison
June 21-27  JR High Camp (Grades 7-9)  Directors: Jeff & Christy Schrunk

RCI CAMPING registration opens February 15th.
Go to www.rcicamps.org to find out more. Register early for a discount.

June 20-26  Mountain (Grades 10-13)  Director: Mike Moores  Colorado
Jul 6-10  Walk the Talk (Grades 10-13)  Director: Cara Smith  Living Hope RB
Jul 11-17  Leadership (Grades 10-14)  Director: Aaron Bailey  Odessa Hills
Tidings of Zion 31

Jul 12-18  Bountiful (Grades 7-9)  Directors: Albert & Charity Esquivel  Odessa Hills
Jul 19-25  Mammoth (Grades9-13)  Directors: Chip & Jill Gowan  Lake of the Ozarks
Jul 26-29  Tiona (Girls Grades 4-7)  Director: Jason & Cathy Hamilton  Odessa Hills
Jul 29-Aug 1  Liahona (Boys Grades 4-7)  Directors: Brett & Nannette Smith  Odessa Hills

TEXAS
July 8-12  2000 Strong Adventure Camp  Contacts: Jerry Skotak 214-674-3051
Chris Taylor 214-507-3923
Camp begins at 5 PM on July 8 and concludes on Sunday July 12. There are two camps held concurrently.
A youth camp for ages 8-18 and a young adult camp for ages 18-25.
The camps are at the Collin County Adventure 1180 W. Houston St. Anna, TX. www.2000strong.us

MICHIGAN-GREAT LAKES REGION
July 5-11  JR High/SR. High Camp
July  Children’s Camp (Grades 3-7) Eric Beach, ON CANADA SIDE

WASHINGTON
Aug 9-14  Northwest Regional Youth Camp (Grades 6-12) Yacolt, Washington
Contact: Kevin Herren 503-562-9384

2020 Restoration Branch Reunions

May 31-June 6  Zion’s Ridge
Independence, Missouri
Contact: Ray Lane 816-650-6573

June 6-13  Central Missouri at Odessa Hills, Odessa, MO
Contact: Judi Smith 816-633-4199 or odessahills.com 816-230-4000
Theme: “The Straight and Narrow Path.” II Nephi 15:10

June 14-19  South Crysler Rst. Branch Reunion
Baker Univ. in Baldwin City, KS
Director: Brian Lair
Contact: Paul & Lynette Davis:
Lynette: 816-795-0703 or Paul 816-739-2795
lynettedavis2400@gmail.com or pauldavislaw@yahoo.com

June 21-26  Restoration Branch Family Reunion
and Conference of Restoration Elders
Sponsored by the CRE and Pastors of Zion (POZ)
Waldo Avenue RB/Center Place Restoration School in
Independence, Missouri
Contact: CRE Office 816-836-3421

June 27-July 4  Buckner RB
Odessa Hills Campgrounds in
Odessa, Missouri
Contact: Justin Jones 816-588-2770

July 20-26  Great Lakes Regional Reunion
Vassar, Michigan
Contact: Helene Danicki 248-651-3208

July 25-Aug 1  Woodbine Reunion
Little Sioux, Iowa
Contact: Alan Ronk 712-592-1977

July 25-Aug 1  Maine Reunion
Brooksville, Maine
Contact: Richard Leighton 207-217-8453

August 1-7  Kirtland Area Family Reunion
Temple Grove Campgrounds,
347 Hamburg Rd., Transfer, Pennsylvania 16154
Contact: Renee Webster 440-622-5837
Email: Rjb_2bnzion@yahoo.com

Aug 3-9  Northwest Regional Reunion
Vancouver, Washington
Contact: Brian Herren 503-949-2484

If any corrections need to be made, contact: CRE Office 816-836-3421 or centerplacetidingsofzion@gmail.com
On Monday, November 11th, at 8:30 in the morning, CPRS honored approximately 30 veterans and first responders with a short Veterans Day program and breakfast. In the weeks preceding Veterans Day, the students were offered invitations to invite any veteran or first responder they knew to a brief ceremony and flag raising in remembrance and honor of their service. Because the weather was icy-cold that morning, it was determined that the ceremony should be held indoors instead of around the flagpole, which I believe was a relief to all.

Following the call for all veterans and first responders to come up on stage, the old, tattered American flag was folded and given to a scout troop for proper disposal. Then a beautiful, new Stars & Stripes was held up for all to see while the high school choir sang the National Anthem. It was a very moving tribute to all those who serve and have served our country!

Our honored guests, along with their student sponsors, were then led to the Sorenson room where their pictures were taken in front of the new American flag and where they could enjoy donuts or cookies and milk together. It was a very meaningful and special Veterans Day for all involved. May God continue to bless this choice land—the United States of America!