

Church of Jesus Christ

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Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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April 6, 1830

Organization of the Church

“Whilst the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, we still continued to bear testimony and give information, as far as we had opportunity; and also made known to our brethren that we had received commandment to organize the church (see Section 17:1a-c of the Doctrine & Covenants), and accordingly we met together for that purpose, at the house of the above mentioned Mr. Whitmer (being six in number) on Tuesday, the sixth day of April, A.D. one thousand eight hundred and thirty.

“Having opened the meeting by solemn prayer to our heavenly Father we proceeded (according to previous commandment) to call on our brethren to know whether they accepted us as their teachers in the things of the kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a church according to said commandment which we had received. To these they consented by a unanimous vote. I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an elder of the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,’ after which he ordained me also to the office of an elder of said church. We then took bread, blessed it, and brake it with them, also wine, blessed it, and drank it with them. We then laid our hands on each individual member of the church present that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the Church of Christ. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree. Some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly.” *Times and Seasons*, vol 3, pp. 944, 945. ([Church History](#), vol 1, pp. 76-77)



The Problem is Us!
Elder Michael Jordison
March 20, 2022
Lamoni, IA

Good morning, everybody, and also those of you at home on Zoom or wherever you might be. I feel like I've had kind of an epiphany of sorts, at least for myself. For some time, I've been feeling like we're not getting enough out of our worship services. I'm may just be speaking for myself, that I'm not getting enough out of worship. Now I don't mean that I'm not blessed by the Spirit but what I do mean is that I'm not sure that we're receiving the kind of ministry that we need, that's effectual and helping us grow. I think what we need is some broken record-type sermons. Now, when I say broken record, for those of you who don't know what a broken record is, it's not when you break it in half, and make it unusable. But rather, records used to get scratches in them and when the needle came around to that scratch, it would just jump back and repeat the sound over and over again. So I feel like we need to be reinforcing our sermons. Sometimes we just need to preach the same thing, over and over again until we really get the message. Sometimes brother Sherman's worries that he repeats the same testimonies and messages over and over again. But I think that is what we need; because we are often slow to understand, are we not? We are quick to forget. What was the last three sermons you heard? What was the content of those? Maybe you picked up a few things, but could you really identify all that was said and how it impacted you? Maybe more to the point is that we fail to execute. We don't do the things that we are instructed and expected to do as children of Christ. So maybe we need to just hear the same message over and over again until we get it. I don't know if that's what is going to happen today but we'll see.

I'd like to start out reading from Doctrine & Covenants 45:1a-2i. The header says this revelation was given through Joseph Smith, Jr. the prophet, the seer of the church (the one that saw into the past and saw into the future. No greater gift can a man have than to be a seer). It was given March 7, 1831, in Kirtland, OH. *Hearken, O ye people of my church, to whom the kingdom has been given, hearken ye, and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the*

heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live and move and have a being. And again I say, Hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not, the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved. Listen to him who is the Advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him, saying, Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life. Hearken, (Do you know what hearken means? It doesn't mean just listen up, it means hear and obey.) O ye people of my church, and ye elders, listen together, and hear my voice, while it is called today, and harden not your hearts; for verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world; a light that shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. I came unto my own, and my own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles and to become the sons of God, and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life. And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me. (That's not just talking about the Book of Mormon and the latter-day work. He's talking about us. He says us. He's sending us into the world to be that light, to bear record of that light.) Wherefore come ye unto it; and with him that cometh I will reason as with men in days of old, and I will show unto you my strong reasoning; wherefore hearken ye together, and let me show it unto you, even my wisdom, the wisdom of him who ye say is the God of Enoch and his brethren, who were separated from the earth, and were received unto myself; a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come: a day which was sought for by all holy men, and they found it not, because of wickedness and abominations, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, but obtained a promise that they should find it, and see it in their flesh. Wherefore hearken, and I will reason with you, and I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old.



And 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; 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.*

I didn't have an opportunity to fast this past week by choice because I've been sick all week and I had to fast because I couldn't eat. Unfortunately, sometimes with sickness brings with it cloudy thoughts where we're not able to focus on anything in particular or as well as we'd like. Some of you that preach are good on speaking from the cuff, just getting up and saying whatever the Lord places on your heart in the moment. But I know I am not a good preacher. I've learned that. So my hope is that what I bring comes to you in focus and in clarity, and you are able to receive and understand in a way that stays with you and helps you grow.

This morning what I want to share with you are understandings I feel that the Lord has been placing on my heart as I have been talking to Him about this past week. And hopefully it comes to you because of the prayers that have been offered on my behalf but also on your behalf, because you are the ones to receive this ministry this morning. I trust that you take the words and counsel that I give and pray about it, consider it and ponder it. Don't let it be quick to leave your mind. Don't be slow to understand. If you don't understand, take it to the Lord and let Him help you to understand what I said. And if you believe I'm way off base in what I share here, then come to me and we'll take it to the Lord and let Him show us the truth .

This morning I want to start with a few experiences of others that I've heard. I have a co-worker friend of mine who has since retired and passed away. I didn't know him very well as he worked out of another office. But I had an opportunity to spend a week with him in technical training several years ago down in Austin, TX. Through that week we shared quite a bit. Now my friend happened to be a nondenominational lay pastor. If you don't know what a lay pastor is it's kind

of like what we are. He had a regular job where he worked and made money but he also helped to shepherd and oversee a small church. He and I had the opportunity to share about the gospel and to talk and to pray together that week. We had 12 hours down and 12 hours back in the car. And I actually got to share some Arthur Oakman tapes that I had at the time and he listened to with me. He didn't say anything about them but he received them.

Anyhow, I just had a really good experience with this man that week. It wasn't until several years later after he passed away, that I was talking to some of his closer associates that worked with him daily and they gave me a little bit different impression of this man. Their experience with him was that he was not a kind man and the words he used were very hurtful and resentful. Some of his conduct was not becoming a minister of the gospel. And because of their experience with him they were really not receptive to any ministry he might have provided. They knew he was a minister but they looked at his actions compared to his words. In their minds he was a hypocrite. His ministry was probably pretty good within his church, within those walls. But it seems, at times, there was something missing when he was outside of that environment.

I have another coworker, who has since retired, who related to me an experience that he had with a prominent elder in the Restoration. This elder happens to be dead now as well. In that experience the interchange was kind of hostile, abrasive and unkind. The argument left a bitter taste in this man's mouth. He knew that this other man was an elder of the church and it left a bitter taste in his mouth. I knew that there was no ministry that he would receive from this other man because of that experience. But I knew this elder. He was a good man. We would all say he was a good man and would probably be surprised at what happened here. Let me say now, I'm not really here to point fingers, to make judgment or to say if this was true but to relate this man's experience with a minister of the gospel and his perception of it.

I have another friend who happens to be an elder in the Restoration. Many years ago as things were forming within this disorganized state that we were in, he was vocal in his opinions. And he was concerned with the way things were being done and concerned with some of the things that he saw "behind the scenes", so to speak. My friend is a very respectful person, I



believe. He's very loving. He's very genuine. He desires to understand and know the truth. And even in a situation where he's at odds with somebody he's always very kind and desires to reason with them. The opportunity came up for him to visit with some of the individuals whom he had questions regarding their methods, some of the things that were said and some of the things that they were doing. (It doesn't matter what that was or who they were.)

He went to visit with them thinking that this was a chance to maybe clarify and find some common ground and understanding. He didn't realize that he was going into a hornet's nest. My friend was extremely surprised at the conduct of the men. He was wasn't expecting this kind of a meeting with them at all which left a horrible taste in his mouth. He felt awful, and it nearly crushed him. Some of the things these men accused him of and told him were not true. I know this to be a fact. They then repeated those things to some others in the organization, which caused my friend to go into a depression of sorts. It wasn't until some time later that a few of the men who had said slanderous things about my friend came back to him and apologized and repented. They said they were sorry and they could see the error of their ways and that what had been said about him was not true. Others did not and some of them have even left the Restoration and others have died. But the bad thing is, that the effectiveness of their ministry was greatly diminished with my friend, because of that conduct. How they conducted themselves inside the church building was in a way that we all would expect. But what was done outside of that worship setting was done in a way that revealed a different motive and character we would expect from servants of Christ.

Now I'm not sharing these because I want to criticize these men because of their sins or their failures.. I have said things and done things that I should not have, and am just as guilty as they, if not more for my own transgressions. The scriptures teach us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And I think that each of these men that have now passed on would want their experiences and failures to be lessons that we can learn from, so we may see how their actions did not back up their words, and how it impacted the ministry that they could bring to those who are still on earth.

There is another example like this from the scriptures that I can think of. Alma took his sons into a faraway land to preach the gospel and while they were there one of the boys wandered off with a pretty girl that had caught his eye and he began acting counter to the teachings of the gospel. I can tell you his name. It was Corianton and you can read about it in Alma 19. He would like you to learn from his mistakes as well. We don't know what all he did while on this missionary trip, but one day his father, Alma, came to him and said, 'Look, buddy, do you remember what you did in the land of the Zoramites, with the harlot Isabel? You didn't conduct yourself in a manner befitting a minister of the gospel. And because of the way that you acted and the way that you expressed your desires and your proclivities, the people wouldn't hear my testimony. They wouldn't hear my message and it greatly hindered the work of the Kingdom and the gospel in that land.

I'm sure that Corianton, if he was in a church setting, being the son of a high priest, could probably give a really good sermon; and I'm sure he could recite out of the scriptures that they had. It wasn't his conduct when he was with the church that was the problem, it was his conduct when he was outside of it, that was the problem.

I have a favorite cartoon of Brother George Knotts that we always kept on the fridge at home. I don't know what happened to it; I'll have to find another one and put it up there. It's a simple cartoon. All of George's cartoons were simple but this was a two panel picture. In the first panel was just simply a balloon quote speaking upwards from the ground that said, 'Lord, I have a problem. It is me.' That's pretty profound really. In the second panel there was a balloon caption coming from above looking downward that said, 'I have the solution. It is me.' Now I identify with that cartoon and you probably can too somewhat. I identify with that because I know that I am a sinner. I am probably the biggest stumbling block for myself in achieving anything of value. I am the one that gets in my own way.

But I think the bigger problem is that I don't recognize and understand, as fully and as often as I should, the power of that second panel. The solution to my problems isn't just that I keep getting in the way and I need to stop doing that. The solution is found in that relying on the words found in that second panel. The Lord has all of the tools and the all of the ability to



make and change me into something different, if I'll let Him.

Now if I were to ask you, 'What's the biggest problem facing the church today. What would you say? The people? Is it because we're scattered, we're disorganized, we don't have a prophet? Is it because we don't have all the quorums filled or all of the offices functioning? Is it because we've lost our land, that the church has sold its property? What do you think the biggest problem facing the church is? It's just like that cartoon. The biggest problem facing the church today is the church itself. It's the people. "Lord, we have a problem. It is us." But again, the bigger problem is that even though we're sinners, and we get in our own way, we fail to acknowledge the power of God's reception in providing the solution. We say that we believe that God can do anything, but we don't always live like we believe it.

My son, Josh, told me that there's a saying that says if you haven't quoted Arthur Oakman in a sermon, you're not a real Restoration preacher. I don't know if that's true or not. I know I've quoted Arthur before. I'm not going to quote him because I don't have the quote or remember it exactly right now, but I recall the intent behind it. I think Arthur was speaking to a congregation and he posed this question, 'Why don't we have Zion?' Is it because we don't have enough money or because we don't have enough land? Is it because we don't have enough zeal? I would say we've got plenty of zeal don't we? Do we all want Zion? Don't we sing songs about it and preach about it. (Sometimes I wonder if we even really know what it is. Is it just this ideal that we have in our minds?)

Why don't we have Zion yet? Arthur Oakman said because there's too much sin in the church? Now think about that for a minute. Too much sin in the church. We could probably point to all of us and pick out the sins that we have. Maybe if we put all that collective sin together that's what's holding us back from Zion. Brother Ray Huggett had an experience back in 1976. We call it the Four Clouds Over Zion. He saw these four clouds of oppression that were just hovering over the holy city, Zion, that wouldn't let it shine forth and emerge in its brilliance. Maybe that's the sin. I think that's somewhat true. I think we do have some sin that limits us but I think if we would look back to that cartoon of George's for just a second. It's not just the sin that's holding us back and keeping us from greater

things, greater understanding, but it's this failure to understand that Jesus has all the tools, all the resources, anything that we could possibly need to achieve and accomplish the goals from the past, present and future, that He has set before us.

Now last week Brother Dan Norman shared with us in his class about the structure of the church and the organization. I don't really want to speak to that. It was good information and I don't have any problem with any of that necessarily, but I think we're looking at God and saying, 'God, we have a problem and we're not growing, we're not fulfilling our responsibilities because we're scattered, we're disorganized. We don't have enough land. (We, in Lamoni, don't even have a building.) There's a whole list of things that we see that we don't have, these deficiencies, and things are holding us back from doing the things that we've been commanded to do. But all the while, we're not understanding that the most important thing is who has the power to overcome all of these obstacles and all of these difficulties.

There have been many in our congregation who have been valuable assets for the Lord in both ministry and in example. But some of them have children and grandchildren that either don't know the Lord or have chosen not to nourish a relationship with Him. For many of them are not active in any church. Some of these may have a testimony as they've had a foundation growing up. I don't want to say anything about anyone in particular now, but we have a severe deficiency in our witness even with our own children and grandchildren. And that's not allowing them to develop a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ to a level that becomes personal and is meaningful in their life— something that they want to take hold of.

Now, we raise our children and we send them into the world because we want them to experience life. We want them to experience things in the world and we want them to grow and to mature. But what's happening is that our children are becoming influenced by the world instead of being *influencers*. I'm not on TikTok but I know what a TikTok influencer is. That's somebody that makes some stupid video that everybody watches and they then gain a following, of thousands or millions. We need to be raising influencers in that respect for the gospel, for the work of the Kingdom. We need to understand that what happens within these walls of our church can be pretty much irrelevant for them



because we're here one day a week, maybe two days a week—and only for a few hours at most. If we haven't made the most of our time while engaged in worship and learning here (at church) then we aren't equipping our children, let alone ourselves, to become influencERS instead of being infleuncED by the world. We are engaged in our communities most of the time and when we're engaged in our communities, that's when we have the opportunity to actually live the gospel. That's when we have the opportunity for our character to be made manifest to the people we interact with every single day. That doesn't mean that we have to always quote scripture. It doesn't mean that we have to be able to explain Daniel's vision of 70 weeks. But it does mean that we have to conduct ourselves in a way that shows that Jesus Christ is the Lord and the Ruler of our life or as Peter said, 'He has been made both Lord and Master — both Messiah and King. If we can do that outside of these walls then we can be that light free of the bushel basket, which when taken off, all men can see and be drawn to.

What is that light? That light is the testimony of Jesus Christ that comes from within us. When people see the light that we emanate, are they seeing us? Now they may see us at first, but at some point they should begin to understand that that light that comes from us, from our testimony is pointing them to someone else, who is the Source. Because if we're just sharing our light and our goodness then we're just pretending to be carriers of the gospel and we're going to fade away, to be seen as the true hypocrites that we are. Those around us may then be quick to reject the truth, and lose out when our light fades and they mistake ours for His.

Now as I said I think the greater problem isn't that we commit sin (because Jesus at the cross can wipe all that away if we will repent), no the greater problem comes because of the way that we conduct ourselves and in our words, in the way that we interact both inside this building and more especially *outside* this building in the world. If what we say and do impacts somebody else and causes them to reject the message of Christ because of our hypocrisy, such as being as the minister of a church, but treating others outside of it with contempt, then the good that might try to do is severely limited in its effectiveness to our associates, or those around us who can see plainly what we cannot. And now the consequences of that sin have been expanded from me and carried to somebody else; where the sin of

my conduct in behaving unChristlike hinders another's opportunity to receive the message.

Maybe Jesus should have said blessed are those who don't take offense, for they shall never be offended. When Jesus said if your brother smites you on the cheek what are you supposed to do? Smack him back? No, you're supposed to turn the other cheek and let him strike the other one. Maybe you haven't had this experience but I've had the experience of having my face punched. It's not a pleasant feeling. Do you think Jesus was telling us that He wants us to be beaten? No, Jesus wants us to turn the other cheek not because He just wants us to be passive and to take a beating. Jesus wants us to turn the other cheek so that good may come from a bad situation. If we will allow that offense that came to us to raise walls within ourselves then the tendency is for us to retaliate in a way that is uncharacteristic of Christ, unChristian in our conduct. He is actually saving us from committing a sin and then turning that sin back to someone else. It's not just smacking them. When we retaliate, the problem is that any future witness that we have can be severely hindered by that act and our ministry is less effective. If we love our brother, we must love him enough to see the greater picture of his need to find redemption for his actions. His sin shouldn't expand and cause us to sin, but rather we should be humble to not find offense, even when justified, and seek for restoration, even at our expense.

I'm quick to take offense at times. I'll admit that. But we need to understand that we have to prefer our brethren over ourselves in those instances. That's the part of humility that we're missing. It's OK for people to be wrong. It's OK for them to be unjust towards us. Jesus told us that that was going to happen. We need to recognize that there will be opportunities, there will be time to make amends, to make corrections. When the Spirit moves upon us at those times of offense then we should follow its leadings to correct, admonish and respond as necessary. But we need to remember that in our conduct doing while that, that we do it in a way that will allow ourselves the ability to minister to that individual or to those individuals who have offended us or affected us. I don't know if that makes sense to you or not.

Now, some of you may not know that I'm a taekwondo instructor. Taekwondo is a Korean martial art and is one of the oldest martial arts there is. In



taekwondo we wear a belt with our uniform, and the better you get, or the longer you practice, the dirtier your belt gets. Traditionally, you start out with a white belt and the more you sweat and roll around on the ground and in the dirt, the darker it becomes because of all the dirt and sweat and the blood mixes together, until finally it becomes a dirty black belt. Now we have progression tests in martial arts today so that you get a new color belt periodically so that you don't have to use the old one and wait for it to get really dirty before you become a "black" belt. The different color of belts signify where you are in your level of training.

I have been instructing for many years now, but I continue to test for higher rank. At my last test in Cedar Rapids, our grandmaster from South Korea was there. To finish the test they wanted me to break cement blocks. Some of you have probably seen this done. They use patio cement cap blocks—I think I even broke one at the church in Mount Ayr years ago. Depending on how many stripes you have on your belt (the degrees of black) determines how many of these blocks you get to break together. At the time I was a third degree and that meant that I had to break three in order to advance to the next level to fourth degree. I remember the man before me, who was breaking his blocks at the test, struggling and pounding away on with his hand. Finally he broke through and in the process he bloodied his arm and hand. It was an awful looking.

They cleaned all that up and got things set back up and I was the next one to go. The three judges were there and told me it was my turn to break. I set myself and prepared to punch through the blocks with my fist, when the lead judge looked at me and said, 'Wait a minute. Didn't you just see the last guy, and what happened to him? Are you sure you want to break that way. I don't know if he wanted me to break with my palm, my foot or my head or what but I said, 'Yes.' I think he was genuinely concerned because it can be pretty psychologically damaging to watch somebody else get hurt. I saw him look at my instructor who nodded yes, then back at me and say, "Ok, go ahead." I could tell that he had doubts. I executed by break and went through all three blocks. I could see their surprised expressions. Now they've seen that before. That wasn't anything new but I think I surprised them that I didn't have any trouble after the last guy.

I tell you that not because I want you to think, 'Oh wow he's this really neat martial arts guy.' To do

that takes years of practice. It takes focus. It takes training. Bob (Rowland), I know you've broken through some boards when you practiced with me. We start out with boards. You don't start out with concrete blocks. I could probably train each of you on how to break a board with just one class and we could all do it if we would listen and be able to focus. I tell you this because I want you to understand that what we're lacking as a church, and what we need in order to be effective in our ministry is a little bit more follow through. You know if I had a piece of paper up here and I put my hand through it it wouldn't be any big trick. My hand would go right through that paper but if I got something a little thicker, like a board, and as it gets thicker and thicker it's becomes harder and harder to penetrate and to go through.

The technique in breaking, as I said, is practice and focus. But the secret to achieve is simple follow through. If you are going to do something you have to commit to the act. You have to execute fully and completely. If you don't, especially when you are punching through three blocks of cement, if you don't commit fully you know what's going to happen. You are going to bloody up your arm and your hand, maybe break bones.

Let me ask you. Where are we at in the church today? If you could just for a second try to remove yourself from any association with this church and become an objective observer. We've been around for 192 years approximately. If you were to look at the effectiveness of this church from an outside perspective how would you grade it? Well, you could grade on a scale of 1-10. I kind of like the grading system I had in grade school. We had E, S, M, I. "E" was excellent (has our performance been excellent?), "S" was superior, "M" was meets expectations and "I" was inferior. We also had "F" for failure. So how would you grade the church? You could look at different categories in the church and maybe assign different grades for our effectiveness how good or how poor we've been. As an outside observer what do you think? Do you think we'd get the top score? Have we achieved excellence in what we were asked to achieve? Have we accomplished those things. Have we even met expectations...?

If as a professor you gave your students instructions and assignments and told them to complete it but they didn't complete it, would you just say, 'Thanks for trying and you can move on.' I think that's



kind of what we expect here from church. We're not really held accountable are we? The things that we learn in class, the things that we hear in our sermons no one ever follows up and says, 'Did you understand that? Are you able to implement that principal which was taught today? Are you following through with that. And do we follow up and say, 'Hey you're struggling with something aren't you. Can I help you with that? I think that's one big area where we're inferior. That is where we are deficient in our ministry, lack of follow through. And on more than one level.

The church is in a state right now that seems to be kind of unorganized. But the state of the church hasn't been the problem. The problem has been us, not recognizing that the Lord has always been out there with His hand extended to us. He wants to lift us up and pull us out of that muck, out of that mire, out of that situation that we're in. He doesn't need for us to organize. He doesn't need for us to buy this or that. He doesn't need for us to prepare in that capacity.

Did Israel and his boys back in the land of Canaan prepare for seven years of famine? What did they do? They didn't do anything. That responsibility was given to Joseph. Joseph responded to the work that was given to him by the Lord and the character of the man that he was is what allowed him to be savior of the world in storing up the grain in Egypt. As Pharaoh and Potiphar and those people that had charge over Joseph saw his conduct and the kind of man he was, they elevated him in stature and allowed him to rise to the prominence of second in Egypt. And because of what he did in that position, Israel and the world were saved. God preserved Israel because one man followed through in his commitment to bear the character of God and stand faithful in what he was asked to do.

God's not looking for us to be busy doing all of these things that we find holy necessary. He's wanting us to accept the promises that He has given to us that if we will be faithful and allow ourselves to conduct ourselves in a manner that portrays the fact that we are His, and not just within these walls of a church, but when we're outside in the world— those other 6 1/2 days of the week when we're in our communities, when we're with our families. We have people in our congregation that need ministry. We have their families within our scope. How can we reach those people if all we do is say, 'Hey, you can come here. You need to be a part of this group.' And it's not just them. It's our other

children, our other grandchildren, it's our friends, it's our neighbors, it's the rest of the church. We have a work to do that requires some follow through with the things that we've been given, the things we've been told. We have a responsibility because when it comes down to final exams what kind of grade are we going to receive? There are so many things that we could be doing, and so many sins that we should be repenting of. But perhaps the beginning isn't to do everything that needs to be done, but instead allowing Christ to handle all of that other stuff and we just focus on developing his Character and our relationship with Him. And then we can allow Him to to be the solution, leading us through all the things that he as for us specifically, to do.

I not really trying to be harsh to anyone. I'll be hard myself because I'm one of the biggest sinners there is, here. But I do want to leave you with this. I'll just say this briefly. Last week Joel asked me if I would consider working through with the congregation on developing a mission statement for this branch. Now we could look at that in a lot of different ways and I'm not going to go through that right now. But I want us to think that in the days ahead. Think about what is it that we are called to accomplish? What is our purpose and how can we best achieve and accomplish that purpose. I'm going to tell you that it's not just what happens here in the confines of this type of service or this environment. Let's be thinking about what has God called us to do and to be. I know that there are things in the scriptures that He's called the collective church to do. I think that that's very important and we need to be focused and engaged in that as well, but what I want us to focus on here is what is God calling the Lamoni Restoration Branch to do? Be praying about that, and how we can be receptive to it. Be seeking His will and His intentions for us and then not just seek those but ask the Lord to change us to understand them and to make us into the kinds of individuals that can accomplish and realize them, to recognize that second panel in the cartoon. The solution is in Him. He can provide every resource. He can take care of every need that we have to accomplish His purposes and designs for us.

The problem is we have to get out of the way and let Him do that and be careful with what we say and how we conduct ourselves. Remember that what we say and what we do to others impacts their relationship with the Lord. I think in the end that will come back on us



way more than anything we've done personally. Does that make sense? I expect you to hold me accountable. I'm going to hold you accountable and let's hold each other accountable with the idea that we are growing together and we're moving forward and we're not just trying to build up the church in Lamoni. We're trying to be a part of that stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands, from Daniel. It's suppose to roll and to fill the entire earth. We haven't gotten to that yet have we? That's what He wants us to do and it starts here. I am a firm believer that Zion can be at any time. It just needs a people who are the Lord's with His heart and mind.

Lessons from the Ark
Elder Tony Crandell
March 27, 2022

I am sure that what I am about to say is a common thread for all five of the priesthood of this branch. In short, many times we feel like we are preaching to the choir. In other words, you folks are probably as knowledgeable about many of these topics as we are. You were either raised in the church or have a long-standing experience with the doctrine and our scriptures.

So, having said that, it is difficult to come up with a topic that is new to you or to present an old topic that will hold your attention.

Many times, I wonder "How important are the historical aspects of our church history"? Yet, some of those topics are very interesting but I am not sure they will contribute to anyone's salvation. We are instructed in the Doctrine & Covenants to "preach nothing but repentance to this generation."

When defining the "Gospel" we find that repentance is one of, if not the main tenant, of the five primary tenets of the Gospel: (1) faith, (2) repentance, (3) baptism, (4) the receiving of the Holy spirit by the laying on of hands, and (5) enduring to the end. The "Good News" is still and will always be Christ's willingness to grant us mercy and forgiveness and eternal life with him, if we would obey His commandments and endure to the end.

In addition, we are commanded to share this good news with everyone. Both Ed and I almost weekly discuss "how best do we do that"? How can we best tell our story in this community in these times? We are not

the only church here in Mt Ayr struggling with that question. Other churches here are not only asking themselves that same question but are having a difficult time keeping a pastor. All in all, in this area, most Christians are somewhat elderly people.

You say why is that? Well, much of that, I believe, is because we have lost the younger generation to the new god of the land - Sports. Our younger folks are totally wrapped up in "competing." Now, there is nothing intrinsically bad about sports. It's the fact that sports have stolen our young people away from Church.

Young people have lost the concept that life is surprisingly short. Millions of our young people are living as though this day-to-day life is the only life that counts. They have completely lost sight of eternity.

The old saying is, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. We can present the Gospel to any of our young people who will listen, but we can't make them sense the responsibility to continue to act.

We have been studying in Genesis and we are now looking at Noah and the Ark. In reading about that event I discovered an interesting situation.

You know the story.... Things on the earth were so evil that God was grieved in His heart to the point that he almost wished He had not even created man. But due to His love of His creation, He granted creation a chance to start over again. Despite the conditions on earth, only one person, Noah, found favor with God.

God told Noah to build an Ark. We have the actual cubit measure here. The ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 3 stories or 45 feet high with one door. The door was a type and shadow of Christ, the only way to safety and salvation.

God did not send Noah to the natural place like to a lake where they would normally build boats. At that location there would be craftsmen, with the skill sets and -know how - tools, experienced vendors and also the necessary construction materials like timbers, and pitch. But God said don't go there; you build that boat right here. There was no river, no lake, no body of water here upon which to float the finished Ark. There were no craftsmen, materials, no skill sets, no know how, tools, or experienced vendors here to provide timbers, or pitch.

God said build it here and the water will come to you. So Why did He do that? It would be God's plan



and He would receive all the glory and all the honor. He said “Noah, You build the boat where I tell you.”

So how is Noah going to do this? Additionally, he was in the middle of a land filled with violence and wickedness. His workmen were no doubt of dubious character. So how on earth is Noah going to do this? Noah is going to believe God and Noah is going to walk by faith. Noah is going to believe God and Noah is going to walk in obedience.

Does this story seem familiar? Aren't we living in similar times. Aren't we living in a crazy nation that has lost its mind? Here folks are going away from a belief in God, burning Bibles, trampling the flag, ripping up the constitution, destroying everything socially that our founding fathers gave to us as a treasure, as a legacy of liberty, and religious freedom. We are destroying everything. So that prompts the question how are we going to survive this?

We are going to have to believe God and we are going have to walk by faith. We are going to have to believe God and we are going have to walk in obedience. Let me repeat the question again. How are we going to survive this? More importantly, how are our children and young people going to survive this? They are going to have to believe God and they are going have to walk in faith. They are going to have to believe God and they are going have to walk in obedience.

How did Noah get through those times? Noah got through because of his faith and obedience.

How are we going to get through these times? We are going to get through these times because of our faith and obedience.

Can you imagine the conversation between God and Noah? No doubt Noah said “God, I've never done this before”...and God said “That's OK Noah, I got this...just do as I say.”

I imagine Noah said “Oh, by the way, Lord, where is this boat going and how am I going to guide it? God, up to this point, had not said one word about a wheel or a rudder or even a window Noah could look out ahead. Oh yes, there was a window in the top of the boat, but no mechanism to steer the Ark with. In addition, God never said one thing about a compass or direction. God just said “Noah, build the boat and leave the details to me. I'll guide it, I'll direct it, I'll watch over you. I'll protect you. There is nothing you have to do. I will provide all that you need!”

That brings us back to today. How are we going to survive the economy? What if the government goes broke? What if they outlaw us gathering for church? What if our social security goes away? What if our children are surrounded by violence no matter where they live? I can remember when Des Moines was a sleepy little town. Now we have a shooting there almost every night; we have thievery and robbery almost every night,

All I know to say is what God told Noah...”Just get on board. Just get on the Ark and have faith in me and believe my words and serve the Lord.” With that commitment of courage and faith the Lord will protect and provide.

Let's think a moment about the massive structure of the Ark. God gave Noah the plan for the boat, but we do not find anywhere in the scriptures a shopping list of materials that Noah was going to need to build this ark. Let me give you a number to consider. The average railroad boxcar is 6000 cubic feet. The Ark was 1,518,750 cubic feet, 450x75x45 which is the approximately the volume of 250 to 300 railroad box cars. Even at that size how was Noah going to accommodate all the animals? First of all, in my mind the animals that Noah accommodated on the ark were probably juveniles not adults.

Did Noah go out and round up these animals and start a zoo, around the Ark? I don't think so. God led the animals to Noah. God would take care of the future sub species. Noah had to wonder why were there seven clean animals and seven clean fowl but only two each of the unclean species?

“Lord, How come seven clean animals and fowls and only two of the others?” God might have said to Noah “stay tuned”, when you get off the ark, I am going to tell you something about the “blood.” The full reasoning for the preservation of these clean animals would not be revealed until the Passover in the book of Exodus was written.

How many people do you suppose worked on the ark? There was no way Noah, and his three sons could have physically built that structure even with divine help. When Sandra and I visited the ARK and as it came into view it was at that moment the story became reality to me. It was no longer just a biblical story. All of a sudden it was reality and plausible. It was confirmed to me by the Holy Spirit that although this particular structure in front of me is a replica, the



story is real. All the pieces of the story suddenly fit together. If you have never been there; it is well worth you time and expense to visit it.

You know Noah had to pay for vendors to bring the supplies to that location. The beams were so massive, it would have taken a major labor force to assist Noah. Remember, the Ark was built out in the middle of nowhere and none of the supplies were available locally.

In all probability...hundreds of people were involved over many years. Not only did Noah need additional help on the Ark itself, but he needed cooks to feed the people every day, loggers to cut and shape the wood, draymen to transport the wood to the building site.

What was happening was that the workmen were seeing firsthand, that this structure was far bigger and complex than Noah as a simple herdsman could accomplish. Even though they were hired by Noah they were all connected to the success of the project. They were personally involved and committed to the project. They knew of the quality of the materials and the workmanship. You know, it took almost three years to build this replica in Kentucky with all the modern day machinery and tools. They did use Amish craftsmen to do the woodwork and have this authentically built.

This to say nothing of the preparations necessary for bringing the animals on board. The workman were also the quality control inspectors. They were hired to ensure the ark was safe and well-built and did not leak.

No doubt they were on a first name basis with Noah and his three sons, as only Noah had the blueprint, and the plan was solely in his mind. I am guessing the three sons were the foremen and supervisors.

Now think about this. All these workmen with all their experience with the project, yet when God got inside and got ready to close the door only Noah and his family responded! All of those people knew about the project, they had experienced it first-hand, but in spite of this they didn't have the faith to get on board.

You know the church today is somewhat like the Ark. Many people come for years. They pay their tithes. They have their Bible under their arm. They are very conscientious about today but they are oblivious about the future. They are oblivious about eternity. The workmen on the ark did their job, and they did it well, but they never got on board. They helped build the ramp for the animals to climb to enter. They helped

build the massive door. By the way, did I mention there was only one door into the ark?

I think their attitude was that they weren't absolutely sure Noah had his act together, that his elevator went clear to the top, that he was really in touch with reality. I mean "really, here we are building this massive boat and there isn't a lake or river anywhere around us that will float this monster."

But they said.... "But hey, Noah is a good guy, he pays good, I really like working for him and his boys. The food is good, but come on, there is absolutely no way we are going to drag this boat to the water anywhere."

They may have said to each other, my advice is "Don't say anything, just keep on working; however, you must know we do laugh a lot at home about this project."

In short, none of the workmen or their families believed for one moment that Noah was in his right mind. Even though they marveled at the plan, they marveled at his commitment to the project, and they witnessed firsthand how Noah was seemingly blessed as he was able to pay for this project as it went along. Noah was a nice guy but had a few fish missing from his stringer.

I can't help but wonder if during the last part of the construction when they were helping Noah move into the ark that the workman didn't say to one another... "have you noticed that there are some weird things affecting the animals around here. I am seeing them walking through my yard and starting to congregate near the building site. A lot of these animals are not common around here."

I don't believe for a moment that Noah went out with a big net and wagon and collected the animals. I believe God called them and led them to the vicinity of the Ark. I think God said to the animal kingdom..."Hey, you all show up and Noah is going to give you a ride."

Wouldn't you think the workmen would become concerned or at least curious at this migration of animals all headed to Noah's farm. You would also think that they might be curious about the clouds gathering in the sky. Remember, the earth was watered by the dew. The people had never experienced rain before ever. But, all of a sudden, the earth is beginning to have tremors, getting ready for the earthquakes. The preparations were starting to manifest themselves.



The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Even though this event was an Old Testament event, it is described in the New Testament in Matthew 24 44:45 IV. It is described in the New Testament so we would know and not forget what He did in the Old Testament.

Why is God repeating this in Matthew? He is saying just like when the flood came, they knew not of its coming. Likewise, so shall also the coming of the son of man be.

God is saying, just like when the flood came, they didn't know it was coming even though they were told about it. But they didn't believe it was actually coming. God is saying that when my Son comes back there will be people in the world that won't believe it is going to actually happen even though they have been told about it for two thousand years. The faithful will not be surprised; in fact, they will be looking forward for the event. But the majority of the folks alive at that time will be like the workmen on the Ark, they will be shocked. Oh, they may say "I think I heard about this one time but I never thought it would happen in my lifetime. Others will say "why didn't someone tell me about this?"

Like the workmen on the Ark, who no doubt heard the story for years and years as they worked on it, they waited too long to "get on board."

Remember Noah didn't close the door. God closed the door. In Matthew it says when the workmen repented they repented too late. Or, to say it another way, when the workmen realized the flood was a reality it was too late to get on board.

Like today, many will say "well, if there is a world war, or if there is a super pandemic, I'll get serious about getting right with the Lord, but right now I need more time to figure this all out. I need the freedom to enjoy life. I really don't want to give up my weekends."

I worry about the millions who think that when they pass from this life they will all be automatically redeemed in the twinkling of an eye by the grace of God without the steps of believing in Christ, having faith in His ability and willingness to forgive their sins, taking the steps of confession, and asking for Him to accept their repentance and being baptized in water and offering themselves to receive the Holy Ghost.

Our young people are living only for today. How do I know that? From a percentage viewpoint they are not participating in a church or Christian setting

anywhere. I said from a percentage viewpoint as there are some who are. As a whole, only a few at best, have only a vague concept of eternity.

Can you imagine what went through the workmen's minds when it started to rain. They had heard about rain from Noah, but they had never physically witnessed it. How about when the ground began to flood. Oh! it's true they had springs of water, and maybe lakes and rivers, but those water sources never left their banks.

No doubt, their wives had heard them talk about "crazy ole Noah" and were saying, But, we've never seen anything like this before. Maybe we should go over to Noah's while we can still get there." They had never experienced thunder and lightning before. The whole earth began to shake with earthquakes as the water came up from deep underground. The Bible says the fountains of the deep broke open.

I am sure at the last minute many fled their homes to go up to the Ark. But guess what? God had closed the door! The same hands that had built the Ark were now pounding on the door wanting Noah to let them in.

You might say...how could God let that happen? I don't know if I could serve a God that would do that.

Now here is the takeaway for this morning. This is what caught my eye and why I decided on this topic for this morning. When God got Noah and his family and the animals on board...He waited seven days before He closed the door. I don't know how many times I've read this account and missed that fact. **He waited seven days before He closed the door.** He waited seven days to see if anyone would repent. God said, my grace is perfect, my grace is complete, whosoever will may come. The door is still open. Will you come? God is begging you.

God said before it rains 40 days and 40 nights, I am going to wait 7 days before I shut the door. Nobody came.

When I saw the following quote, " Our young people have lost the concept that life is surprisingly short. Millions of our young people are living as though this day-to-day life is the only life that counts. They have completely lost sight of eternity." I was reminded of the workmen on the Ark.

Let's find a way to tell the young folks, the door is still open and ask them will you come?



Hold Fast to the Love of God
High Priest Joel Loving
March 27, 2022

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. I have been looking forward to this. I know we're few in number but don't let that affect you. I have some things that I am anxious to say that I feel the Lord wants me to say that I want you to hear.

So we get into a focus on listening to the Holy Spirit. You're listening to two things now. You're listening to my voice but you're also at the same time listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, the words that the Lord would bring us. I hope to make that more clear as we continue.

My theme for today is Hold Fast to the Love of God. Although we can sort of take that for granted and say, 'Well, duh. What insight is there in that phrase?' But I want to add meaning to it as we go through a number of scriptures, a number of testimonies and illustrations for what that should mean to all of us because in these times and in the times that we're about to face, what is it we're holding to? What is that that is a foundation? What is it that we cling to? I want to broaden our scope here to understand this important phrase.

I begin with really a broad foundation from Joshua 22:5. *But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.* Every single one of us understands that, knows that and every one of us probably forgets that from time to time.

I want to speak about this more specifically, about honoring the love of God. This story comes from and is probably one of the very first stories from the Book of Mormon where Lehi has had his vision of the tree, of people trying to attain the fruit and eat of the tree. Part of his family does and part of them do not. You know the story but Nephi, the son of Lehi, tries to understand this more completely and goes to the Lord to have really an explanation of what the meaning of this was about. He's visited by an angel. This passage comes from 1st Nephi 3:63-64. The angel said, *Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? Do you*

remember what it is? *And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things.*

Now you know that the Lord loves you but I don't know that any of us can really imagine being in the presence of God Himself, inches away from Jesus Christ and understanding what that love actually feels like in that moment but I hope we can capture that to some degree. The angel now said, *Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.* (65) This love of God is the cohesive force of the world. It's what holds us all together, the entire universe and all creation, and it's also at the core of your being, inside you and within you is this love of God. It is what you are made of and yet do we always cling to it in the way that I think the Lord wants us to.

I want to tell you a story that happened to me at my brother's death. He died in my arms. He had cancer and I was over visiting with him. He was sick enough that he was getting bed sores and he wasn't strong enough to turn over in the bed so we had to help him up and turn him and then bring him back down. It was at that moment actually as we got him sitting up and I was holding him that he breathed his last.

It was a powerful experience for me. I will not diminish the sadness of it but I had been prepared for it because a week or two before the family had been given one last chance to visit with Kim. I remember knocking on the door. The door was facing where he sat in the chair in the living room and he signaled me and I walked in. He signaled me closer and I got closer and he pulled me down and kissed me on the cheek. I think for the first time in my life my brother kissed me. We would wrestle but not kiss. But I knew then that this was it. This was going to be a significant last moment, last words. Those are always memorable experiences in time and this was with Kim.

He said, as I stood back up (I knew something important was going to be said.), 'I've got it.' I knew the minute he said it that I was going to hear something powerful. We had always in our family discussed a lot of things, argued about a lot of things, gone back and forth. We used to play tennis together. I was younger so I wasn't a better tennis player but I was in better shape and so I would be ahead somewhere like 5-2 in the set. Then we would change sides every other game and during one of the crossovers he would mention something insulting or some world issue. I got to



thinking about what he said, and the next thing I knew I had lost 7-5 and it was like, ‘what happened’ and the game was over.

We were fixing the world all the time and so when he said in that moment, ‘I’ve got it.’ I knew he had a truth that I needed to hear. So I asked, ‘What is it.’ He said, ‘It’s simple. Two things. These two things I’m about to tell you a child could understand.’ Tucker (Linda Boswell’s granddaughter) will understand what I am about to say. Lylly could understand what I’m about to say but I don’t know that a college professor or an intellectual would even consider this important, and that’s part of the beauty of this truth that came from the Lord to him.

So he’s dying, he’s passing away, he’s been figuring out things and kind of putting them into place and he says two things. It’s the love of God and our trust in that. At the moment I was flooded with insight about the depth of not only that love but the trust that was going to be required of me as I went forward. As Kim passed away would I be able to trust in the love of God in that moment or would I lose composure, would I lose faith, would I crack, would I crumble when the challenges of life hit or could I, in the midst of what was unfolding, trust that God’s love would bring the answer.

Now, I knew that Kim was going to pass away shortly so when he did die in my arms, I chose. I don’t think of myself as a very strong person. I don’t think of myself as a very smart person. I don’t think of myself as a very good leader but I came through at that moment. I trusted that God was there in that flagrant moment between life and death. I was able to trust the will of God.

Now, I did not mourn Kim’s death because of that experience. That doesn’t mean I wasn’t sad. I don’t miss him. I don’t cry but there is something about the passing of this life into the heavenly realms which if we can believe in which we can’t imagine and trust Him is truly a glorious thing. It’s actually something that those who understand it can look forward to it.

From John 14:23-26, *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the*

Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. The Comforter is promised and will come and has come.

I want you to think of June 26, 2015, almost 7 years ago. Do you have any idea what happened that day? This is a historical day. The Supreme Court decided that day that homosexuals could marry legally in the country. The most repeated phrase on Facebook and Twitter which knocked out everything else that had ever been said before in terms of the most people saying that was now replaced by the phrase *love one*. Do you remember this? *Love one*. June 26th the world claimed on Facebook and Twitter *love one*. Do you believe that? I don’t. Not that day. The way the world thinks I understand yes *love one*.

Let me say something to you. There are four kinds of love spoken of in our scriptures. I believe these are Storge, Phileo, Eros and Agape. Do you know what Storge is? It’s the love of family. Do you know what Phileo is? Think of Philadelphia. Brotherly love, the love of your brother. Eros is romantic love and Agape which is the pure love of Christ, the pure love of God so I ask you, which love won? Eros, not Agape. I don’t believe God’s love won that day.

I am going to read from Luke 12:60-62. *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house, divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* What? Christ is coming not to bring peace, not to bring unity but to bring division. Do you know what this scripture is talking about? He’s talking about the love of man and love of culture and Storge and Phileo and Eros. Something had to happen from divinity to separate what people called love into what really was love and some would get it and some would not. Some did get it and some did not.

I remember in my college years, the first year I was at Johnson County Jr. College. It’s a pretty wealthy college, pretty nice. My sister and I both went there. My sister, Cindy, the one that was born right before me is blind. She was attending college there. Our schedules didn’t meet very often but at lunch time one day I was



sitting down at my normal table with the guys who I had gone to college with. There were a number of them sitting down chatting away and one of them was laughing and pointing, ‘Look at that. Look at her.’ I turned around and I wasn’t sure what I was seeing in the beginning but then I noticed what he was talking about. It was my sister. They were going through the lunch lines and there was a board about the size of our screen here with the menu like you see in McDonalds or any kind of a restaurant but this person, Cindy, was doing this thing where she puts her face right next to a large sign so she can see the print and he was laughing at her. There was a moment of quiet at our table and I said, ‘That’s my sister.’ He said, ‘Oh, yeah, right, right. You’re just joking.’ ‘No, I’ll show you.’ So I went and I got Cindy and I brought her back to the table and introduced her to my friends, not to make them feel ashamed, not to make them feel bad but because they didn’t know. It’s easy to laugh at the stranger who’s different when you make the connection.

This is the love of God at work. The cohesive force of the universe bringing people together in relationship. You see in our culture we tend to let issues define the relationships. We don’t know her. It’s easy to make fun of somebody like that. Look how different and strange that is. Behaving so strangely and differently, but because I know her as my sister, we have relationship that defines that situation differently than my friends were defining it, and so when they met her their countenance changed too. But what I want to say is allowing issues to define our relationships is wrong and I’m going to try to describe that as we continue here. The relationship you have defines the issues. Issues do not define the relationships. If you are Republican and I’m Democrat or your liberal and I’m conservative or you have these set of values, are those issues defining the relationship? They do in our culture but I believe that the relationship defines issues because you know and experience the love of Christ and the inside of Christ that changes the relationships and the issues no longer define them. The relationship defines the issues. Does that make some sense?

It’s about being connected to this relationship and allowing that to define what happens in those moments when issues can come up. John 15:1-10 says, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it,*

that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

I want to make this real and I want to go through life and I want to go through your life but I can’t do that all at once. I bring as an example people from Crown Colony where I work. I had a tenant come outside at about 10 AM. We’re gathered in the Dining Hall and there are a number of people around. He kind of stumbles out there. He has just woken up and somebody says, ‘Good morning, sleepyhead.’ He was not in a great spirit. He didn’t wake up in the greatest attitude. That’s pretty typical. Right? It ruined his day. Just that comment and the attitude that he had, he just turned around and said, ‘Blank this. I’m going back to bed.’ I knew he was going to go back to his room, lay back down and wouldn’t come out the rest of the day. That’s an example of an issue now driving the relationship. He got offended and something between him and another person became more important than what was going on between him and the Lord. Although we’re talking about him I believe, if I can safely, gently and lovingly say this, you and I do this too. Somebody says something and we snap and all of a sudden whatever was going on here isn’t driving the relationship or the conversation or the action. Our focus is now the fight, the argument, the disagreement, the differences, whatever they may be. It’s no longer I think really the connection that the Lord wants.

To really be in touch with the love of God as commanded is the ultimate and eternal connector. It’s not a disconnecter. It’s a connector. To cling to temporal things first brings separation with spiritual things. 2nd Nephi 6:72-74 says, *And, in fine, wo unto all those who*



die in their sins: for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and remain in their sins. O, my beloved brethren, remember the awfulness in transgressing against that Holy God, and also the awfulness of yielding to the enticings of that cunning one. Remember, to be carnally minded, is death, and to be spiritually minded, is life eternal. To sin is to disconnect from this relationship. To repent is to reconnect. To forgive and offer forgiveness is also a reconnector.

Now bear with me, I had this creative idea to try this. I have this light that I want you to see. This light is a representation of the love of God and my connection. As I go through life and experience life, I wake up and see my wife and give her a hug or wake up grumpy, and the light goes out.

Now the Lord is always connected with us and He's always aware but in a symbolism here I want you to think about as you go through life, are you connected to the light or is it flickering and going out? All of a sudden what your boss said to you or some coworker said to you pulls you away from the Holy Spirit and you're grumpy and your unkind and you're not at your best. When that light is out we suffer.

So let's go through that. Trusting the love of God and Kim's counsel. The light is on and it stays on and I hear him say, 'There is nothing more powerful than the love of God and your ability to trust that makes all the difference in the world.' If we have to measure, if you had to score your trust in the love of God 0-100, where would you place your number? At all times the amount of love in measurement fluctuates but the point is this has to stay connected to the relationship with you and the Lord.

What about when Cindy couldn't see the board? What about my friends. Was the light on? They were disconnected from the love of God because of their reaction to her. When she came over I'm not sure how much but the light came on and there was a sense of relationship. Do you think the next day when they saw Cindy up at the board again trying to feel the words that were on the board to know what the meal was they laughed and made fun of her? No.

What about Scott at Crown Colony who was called sleepyhead and was so grumpy he wasn't feeling it and he left for the day. He changed his day because somebody called him sleepyhead. That's how light their relationship was. I'm not really criticizing that so much

as saying how sad. There's a role that we all play when trying to keep this connection.

What about June 26, 2015? Did the light go out? Was that love one or have we misunderstood what the love of God really is. We understand romantic love. When you say to a teenager I love you do they have enough of an understanding, a broad enough base to know that it's not romantic love, it's not the love they see on TV and those sorts of things.

So I leave it. Turn to this. *Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men. . .* Does it shedd itself to you? Do you feel it? Do you know about it? Do you exercise it? Do you maintain this connection or do we become too easily disconnected? (1st Nephi 3:63-64)

I taught for a number of years in an alternative high school. I was really curious about how people think and how their minds make decisions. We all have these, what I would call decisive moments when we make a decision and pursue a direction or a plan and it's either right or wrong but the truth of the matter is that that decision is made in a moment. How do we make good decisions in just a moment? How do we make such bad decisions in just a moment?

So I did a year of research but here's what I kind of came up with. I won't go into this with a lot of detail but I'll simply say this. I taught with these kids. They'd been kicked out of school or left voluntarily and now they are coming back trying to get their GEDs and they are struggling. They had these big huge dreams. They were going to have big houses and lots of cars and the picket fence and everybody was going to like them but they couldn't come to class.

Wait a second. You have to understand this dream is good. It's a great dream to have to own a house but that dream is not just a magical flight on some carpet. That is a thousand tiny steps that are hard, that are challenging every single day. A decision to come to school when you don't feel like it. The decision to come to church when you don't necessarily feel like it puts you on that stair step to go up there. If you can't make that stair step, how in the world are you going to make it to the two-story house that you are going to have. Do you understand and they would kind of nod but it's these little bitty decisions as we go through the day that



helps us stay connected to the light and to the love of God.

Here's where it comes from so here's what happens. Your brain thinks in a pattern. It wants to think in a pattern. Brains that don't think in a pattern are all over the place and you need help. But the brain thinks in a pattern. It's like a train. It's like a car on a train that leads to the beginning of a thought leads to the end of a thought, leads to the next thought, leads to the next thought, leads to the next thought. Correct? So there is a chain of thoughts in a direction, in a pattern and we need to take advantage of this because we know when we're thinking negatively what's the next thought going to be? I'll give you an example. The Royals can't pitch. The Royals can't hit. The Royals stink. What's the next thought? They are losers. Wait a second. You just proved it. Negative thought, negative thought, negative thought. We think in patterns, folks. You think in patterns. Arrest yourself when you start thinking in a negative pattern to prevent the next negative thought from bringing you down. The love of God and the light of God would reach you and help reframe your worldly thoughts, so we must trust that learn in that moment to ask Him to help us think.

So moment by moment you are making these decisions and you are thinking. Here's how it works. It unfolds this way. Your thoughts in a stream will create an attitude. Your attitude over time will create a mood. Your mood over time creates a disposition. Disposition over a longer period of time creates a personality and moment by moment you have literally created who you are and what you represent. You change that by a tiny decisive moment, by a tiny decisive moment connecting with the love of God and become like Jesus connected to the Vine that Jesus is.

Hebrews 8:8-11 says, . . . *the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; 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; And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the*

Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. But we will know God. No longer will our relationship with others affect our relationship with the Lord. The relationship with the Lord will be the one affecting all others.

So I say to constantly seek and hold fast to the love of God. Always honor clinging to that and with that being foremost in your life as it is in my prayer for you. Amen.

MARB Congregational Retreat

On April 16 the branch held a retreat at the church with 24 adults and 9 children present for the morning presentations. Seventeen adults stayed for the entire day.

The morning began with singing songs of praise, led by Sue Trullinger, accompanied by Naomi Anderson on the piano, which prepared us to hear those bearing their testimonies. Heartwarming testimonies were given by Bob Bell, Joel Beck, Dorothy Loeding, Ron Smith, and Linda Winkler (read by husband Gordon Winkler). All testimonies focused on the way the Lord has reached into the lives of each one, guiding and directing



them through difficult issues in life.

The elementary aged children had separate classes taught by Diane Anderson in which they prepared for a



presentation at the end of the day. They stenciled shirts with *JESUS* on them, made hand puppets, made a puppet theater, and learned songs to sing. There were three toddlers who did not participate in all the classes for the whole day.

The adult class was taught by Elder Jason Hamilton from Atherton, MO branch. The topics were All are Called, Forgiveness, and Following the Good Shepherd.

Lunch consisted of various pizzas, fruit, veggies, and cookies.

There were two afternoon sessions, followed by the youth presentation. The four girls sang for us and then presented a Palm Sunday procession. The adults had palm leaves they threw on the floor and the children threw their coats down before the figure of Jesus riding on a donkey. They then presented a puppet show of the women arriving at the empty tomb of Jesus with the angels telling them that He Is Risen. It was a charming depiction of the story and demonstrated to the adults how much the children can bring to the ministry.

Everyone was blessed by the spirit and topics of the day.

JCRB General Conference

April 18-22, 2022

**Theme: He has already prepared the way
(1st Nephi 1:65; 1st Nephi 5:58, 59 and 1st Nephi 2:100-102)**

Nine members of the Lamoni Restoration Branch attended some or all of conference. It was an outstanding conference (my opinion). The preaching was exceptional, the prayer services were filled with the Spirit and the fellowship was strengthening. Joel Loving preached Tuesday evening sharing on the theme “The commandments of God must be fulfilled.” Sherman Phipps presided over the Thursday afternoon preaching service. The theme was “He nourishes and strengthens the obedient, and provides means to accomplish what He has commanded.” Jim Major shared the benediction at the Friday afternoon service.

The highlight of the Conference was the ordaining of five Seventies: David Bates, Gary Metzger, William Howen, Glenn Vreeland and Eric Woolery. One Apostle was also ordained: Roger McKinney (Sinnagwin) on Friday morning.

The High Priests meet monthly on Zoom but also have held several retreats. Last August a retreat was held after the General Conference. The purpose of the retreat was to ask for direction from the Lord regarding bringing ministry to the Lamanite Nations. This issue had been discussed during several past retreats and an objective was set that the high priests would all gather in fasting and prayer for guidance at this retreat last August. The Lord’s answer to “how can we bring ministry to the Laminates” was sought.

At this retreat held at the JCRB Office 17 of the 21 High Priests were present. After reiterating the purpose of the retreat all knelt down and began praying believing that when we gather in unity and in one heart seeking the Lord’s direction in prayer, He will answer.

After several prayers, the Lord spoke to Fred Greene saying, “Sinnagwin is called to be an Apostle.” He was deeply moved by this revelation but asked the Lord to let this call come through an Apostle of His choosing. No sooner had he uttered those words than Apostle Randy Vick stood and began speaking in a voice that was clearly moved by the Spirit and spoke these words:





“My sons, and you are my sons, I am pleased that you have come to me in humility with a great desire to know My will. My son Fred spoke under the influence of My Spirit when he told you that I have prepared the way. I have prepared the way. I brought you to Sinnagwin and he responded. I have been preparing him for this work. He is called to be an Apostle of My Son, Jesus Christ. You have the authority, My authority to make that happen.”

The Lord also spoke to the High Priests gathered saying that three Apostles: Randy Vick, Doug Patterson and Hugh Caldwell were to go to Sinnagwin and tell him the words that were spoken through Apostle Randy Vick. Then all three of them were set apart by the laying on of hands for the journey and the task before them.

Sinnagwin accepted the call and was at the Conference. He will be the first Native American Apostle ordained in North America and will, along with the other Apostles be engaged in the work the Lord has laid out for them.

The ordination service was unique in that people from the First Nation’s congregation of the CoC were there. There were two drum songs sang, the first being equivalent to an invocation and the last a thank you song. An eagle feather was presented to Sinnagwin which represents entering into a commitment, receiving an honor, moving to a new direction or symbolic of a deed performed for the benefit of the people. It is often compared to an ‘antenna.’ It represents the connection between the Creator and the owner of the feather. Smudging was also performed in which Sinnagwin was



smudged with Sweet Grass. It gives off a sweet aroma when it is burned and is symbolic of cleansing, preparation for ceremony and bringing in the Holy Spirit. During the drum songs I could feel my heart beating in time with the tempo of the drums. High Priests Joel Loving and Sherman Phipps and Apostle Randy Vick ordained Sinnagwin to the office of High Priest and Apostle.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Missionary Family Reunion June 19-25 at Graceland University. To register go to missionaryfamilyreunion.org and click on the registration button at the top right.

Restoration Family Reunion July 30-August 6 at Odessa Hills Campgrounds. To register go to restorationfamilyreunion.org.



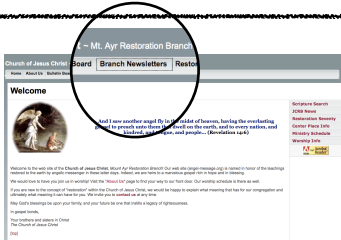
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www.gospelrestored.org



And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

May Preaching Assignments

Mount Ayr:

May 1st - Prayer, testimony and sacrament service

May 8th - Ed Anderson

May 15th - Tony Crandell

May 22nd - TBD

May 29th - Rodney Bastow

Lamoni

May 1st - Gary Metzger

May 8th - Ron Smith

May 15th - Larry McHargue

May 22nd - Michael Jordison

May 29th - Bob Rowland

THIS WILL BE THE LAST NEWSLETTER YOU WILL GET UNTIL SEPTEMBER. We hope that you have a great summer and get to attend a reunion or a camp.

Please remember that both Mount Ayr and Lamoni services are zoomed each Sunday. Go to [gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)