

**Of One Heart and Mind: The Mission to Establish the Cause of Zion in the  
History of the Restoration Movement and Life of Community of Christ**

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Regardless of time or location, all persons begin and end life in some form of community. It is inherent to our human nature to seek community for safety, security, comfort, relationship, and fulfillment. The mission of community called Zion has been one of the primary distinctives of Community of Christ theology and mission from the beginning of the Restoration movement. “Zion’ expresses our commitment to herald God’s peaceable kingdom on Earth by forming Christ-centered communities in families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> It is the call to create communities “where all will be welcomed and brought into renewed relationship with God, and where there will be no poor.”<sup>2</sup> Community of Christ believes that “true community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed...upholds the worth of persons...and provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people.”<sup>3</sup>

The call to establish the cause of Zion has been part of the make-up of the Restoration movement since its inception. It developed in a religious environment that sought to return to the church of first-century of Christianity, a time as they imagined before rituals and ceremonial garb had become parts of Christian worship. Just as the name of the church started by Joseph Smith, Jr. has changed over time, so has the concept of Zion; instructions and counsel are always couched within the language of the time and place in which they were given. <sup>4</sup> As a result they may not apply to other cultures or times and should thus be reinterpreted for our own time and place.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs*, 3rd ed. (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 2012), 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Hereafter referred to as Joseph Jr.

<sup>5</sup> “Basic Beliefs Series 15: We Believe in Zion,” *Saints Herald* 116, April 1969, 31.

For Community of Christ and the cause of Zion, the process of reinterpretation has progressed over the last 186 years. The cause of Zion has been an integral part of the vision and mission of the Restoration movement from the beginning and cannot be removed from Community of Christ DNA. The church must acknowledge both the hindrances and progressions of this part of its mission because “confessing the history of the concept of Zion also means proclaiming that from our earliest days we have been *a people who felt a call to make this world a better place, to act out God’s purposes for this world by making real human communities which expressed our visions of how things should be*” (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I will examine how the concept of Zion has developed since 1830 and how we as a people can continue the mission of Zion into the future of Community of Christ while honoring our past.

### **Beginnings**

The early visions for Zion emerged in the era of Christian Primitivism, which carried the goal of restoring the church to its original first-century form, “stripping away all doctrinal and administrative vestiges of modernity that had contaminated ‘the one true church.’”<sup>7</sup> Instructions were given to Joseph Jr. through divine counsel regarding the establishment of a new dispensation of the original church. The call to “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion” was given to Joseph Jr. and Oliver Cowdery, the translator for the Book of Mormon at the time, in 1829.<sup>8</sup> As this was a year before the Church of Christ was formally established, it is fair to say that the cause of Zion has been part of the institution’s journey from the beginning.

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<sup>6</sup> C. Robert Mesle, “Zion and the Future of the RLDS Church,” in *Restoration Studies IV* ed. by Marjorie Troeh (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1988), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Scherer, *The Journey of a People: The Era of Restoration, 1820 to 1844* (Independence, Missouri: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013), 166-167.

<sup>8</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 6:3.

After years of theological development, Joseph Jr. composed the “Epitome of Faith” in 1842, which stated that “we believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaic [sic] glory.”<sup>9</sup> Readings in the Doctrine and Covenants draw parallels between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with the exiled Israelites of the Old Testament and the gathering in Zion to the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem. Joseph Jr. believed “a new dispensation was upon them to establish New Jerusalem” and that God had created a new covenant with the Saints that replicated the covenant with the Israelites.<sup>10</sup>

One of the key sections of the Doctrine and Covenants regarding Zion is Section 36, which appears Joseph Smith Jr.’s Biblical Revision as Genesis 7:1-78. This section contains a portion of the prophecy of Enoch and tells of a “city of holiness, even ZION [sic].”<sup>11</sup> The key verses in Section 36 state that “the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them.”<sup>12</sup> Divine counsel also spoke of a “land of...inheritance” for the Saints in a covenant promise from God, and instruction to for “the gathering of [God’s] elect...unto one place upon the face of the land.”<sup>13</sup> In Doctrine and Covenants section 45, it further states:

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., “Epitome of Faith,” *Times and Seasons*, March 15, 1842, 710, accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100310.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Scherer, *Era of Restoration*, 166.

<sup>11</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 36:3a.

<sup>12</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 36:2h-i.

<sup>13</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 38:4d and 28:3.

And with one heart and one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you, and it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the Saints of the most high God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there...<sup>14</sup>

The land of promise, of New Jerusalem, of Zion, was ultimately identified as Independence, Missouri.<sup>15</sup> The sacred inheritance of Zion was a millennial expression of salvation by works in that it was through the building up of Zion that the Saints would gain salvation.<sup>16</sup> It is from Zion that the testimony of the church would go forth,<sup>17</sup> creating a “hub – both of the church’s internal functions and its missionary outreach.”<sup>18</sup>

Understandably, attempts to establish Zion in Independence were met with hostility from local citizens and the Saints were expelled from Missouri in 1831. Communities in Kirtland, Ohio, Far West, Missouri, and Nauvoo, Illinois had similar results until the eventual assassination of Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1844. Following Joseph Jr.’s death, several sects formed and moved to various parts of the country, the largest being the following of Brigham Young to Utah. One such group that gathered in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois had high hopes of “reestablishing the presidency through the lineal “seed of Joseph” and cleansing the church of heretical beliefs.”<sup>19</sup> As efforts were made to persuade Joseph Smith III to assume the prophetic mantle,<sup>20</sup> a conference of remaining Saints was held in 1852 to address several issues, one of them being gathering to Zion. The conference resolved that “there is no stake to

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<sup>14</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 45:12c-d.

<sup>15</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 57:1d.

<sup>16</sup> Scherer, *Era of Restoration*, 182.

<sup>17</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 58:4a.

<sup>18</sup> Miriam Elizabeth Higdon, “Eyes Single to the Glory: The History of the Heavenly City of Zion,” in *Restoration Studies I*, ed. by Maurice Draper (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 272.

<sup>19</sup> Scherer, *The Journey of a People: The Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946*, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Hereafter referred to as Joseph III.

which the Saints on this Continent are commanded to gather at the present time,” but that Saints on other continents should begin to move to America in preparation for the time “when the scattered saints on this land will also be commanded to gather and return to Zion” and their sacred inheritance.<sup>21</sup> Until such time, all Saints should “turn their hearts and their faces towards Zion, and supplicate the Lord God for such deliverance.”<sup>22</sup>

When Joseph III assumed leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1860, pressure to address the issue of Zion and the gathering was great. Having witnessed the catastrophe of prior attempts, however, Joseph III was reluctant to encourage gathering to a specific location. In some ways, he felt that the Saints “had never exhibited the respect for each other that made possible a communitarian society, nor had they shown the personal piety and striving for perfection crucial to the successful establishment of such a Christian utopia.”<sup>23</sup> Instead, Joseph III focused more on spiritual purity and personal righteousness rather than physical gathering; he encouraged the Saints to become involved in humanitarian projects to eliminate sin in the world as the church awaited further instruction to establish a physical embodiment of Zion.<sup>24</sup>

Joseph III encouraged the Saints to seek places to settle “where they can serve God, be good to their fellow men, live uprightly and honestly before God and in the sight

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<sup>21</sup> Jason W. Briggs, et. al., *A Word of Consolation to the Scattered Saints* (1853), 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Roger Launius, “Quest for Zion: Joseph Smith III and Community Building in the Reorganization, 1860-1900,” in *Restoration Studies III*, ed. by Maurice Draper (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 315.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-316.

of men.”<sup>25</sup> Part of Joseph III’s vision of doing good and not evil addressed making provisions for members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as society at the turn of the twentieth century faced an increase in the population of those in need.<sup>26</sup> In Lamoni, Iowa, the Saints Home for the Aged was established in 1898 and the Saints Children’s Home in 1911. In 1904, the Mound Grove Cemetery opened in Independence for the burial of church members, and the Independence Sanitarium and Hospital was dedicated in 1909. Of the four institutions, the Sanitarium and Hospital is the only one that was open for the use of non-church members, although not by Joseph III’s choice.<sup>27</sup>

The succession of Frederick Madison Smith<sup>28</sup> as Prophet/President of the RLDS Church after the death of his father, Joseph III, saw a continuation in social involvement and renewed focus on the gathering of the people to Zion. The principle of gathering to Zion was not a dominant feature of Joseph III’s theology and Fred M. found his personal theology more in line with his grandfather, although without the emphasis on a millennial expectation of the Second Coming and reign of Christ on earth.<sup>29</sup>

Fred M. believed the purpose of Jesus Christ’s ministry was found in the promise that he came so others “may have life and have it abundantly,”<sup>30</sup> and the greatest

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<sup>25</sup> *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Volume 3 – 1844-1872* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1973), 280.

<sup>26</sup> The church was officially incorporated as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1872, hereafter referred to as the RLDS Church. See Scherer, “On to Plano, Illinois: Naming the Church of Jesus Christ and A Historic Church Seal,” *The Journey of a People: Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946* (Independence, Missouri: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013): 151-157.

<sup>27</sup> See Scherer, “Transformation to Modernity: Challenge and Response,” in *Journey of a People: Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946* (Independence, Missouri: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013): 203-210.

<sup>28</sup> Hereafter referred to as Fred M.

<sup>29</sup> Scherer, *Era of the Reorganization*, 502.

<sup>30</sup> John 10:10, NRSV.

commandments: love God and love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>31</sup> Fred M. explained that the central idea of religion is love of God that can only be demonstrated by social interaction, or love of and service to one's neighbor.<sup>32</sup> This love of one's neighbor should motivate social reform of a Christianized society and encourage less focus on one's self.

We stand for that form of social order in which every person shall have fullest opportunity for the complete development of his chiefest talent, and then for the exercise of those talents in contribution to the welfare of society. For any social reform to be lasting or general it must be built upon a religious foundation...it must include God.<sup>33</sup>

Fred M. covered all bases in preparation for Zion building, from intense education for both ministers and members with instruction on their roles in the cause of Zion to detailed plans as to who should gather first and when as directed by the Presiding Bishopric.<sup>34</sup> Divine counsel instructed members on "faithful adherence to the faith and work of the church, that mankind may be blessed by and find peace in those religiously social reforms and relationships which have been divinely imposed as a great task of achievement."<sup>35</sup> This great task, the building of Zion as a literal location, was one of the key foci of Fred M.'s tenure as Prophet/President of the church, as he preached about it, made land purchases, and created plans and policies for its establishment, only to conclude his leadership with Zion as "both a dream and disappointment."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew 22:37-40, NRSV. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

<sup>32</sup> Frederick M. Smith, "Social Ideals of the Church," in *The Writings of Frederick M Smith Volume I*, compiled by Norman D. Ruoff (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1978), 103.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> Scherer, *Era of the Reorganization*, 504.

<sup>35</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 137:6a.

<sup>36</sup> Scherer, *Era of the Reorganization*, 546.

Following Fred M.'s death in 1946, leadership of the RLDS Church and the prophetic mantle passed to his brother, Israel A. Smith.<sup>37</sup> While Fred M.'s tenure was marked by strategic plans for the physicality of Zion and the state of society necessary for successful Zion-building, Israel A. turned to the spiritual condition of the people necessary to bring about Zion. Following the 1947 General Conference, President Elbert A. Smith drew particular attention to the final paragraph of divine counsel accepted into the Doctrine and Covenants by the conference body: "Zion conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies."<sup>38</sup> The church was reminded that "God created all things spiritually before he created them physically...had we millions [of dollars], we might build the outer structure of Zion; of what benefit would they be if the spirit of Zion was not within the people who came to dwell there?"<sup>39</sup>

Before a physical gathering of Zion could come to fruition, the Zion conditions and principles must be lived out in individual communities wherever they are found. The idea of Zion as leaven in society – an agent of change infiltrating every corner of society and enriching the spirit and culture of the community – was beginning to emerge with a transition from one insular community to specific stewardship initiatives in "pilot communities representing a vital response to the historic commission to build up the kingdom of God."<sup>40</sup>

More directed theological study and change began to take place in the second half of the twentieth century as the RLDS Church expanded into an international church and

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<sup>37</sup> Hereafter referred to as Israel A.

<sup>38</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 140:5c.

<sup>39</sup> Elbert A. Smith, "Blue Pencil Notes," *Saints Herald*, May 3, 1947, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Richard P. Howard, "The Emerging RLDS Identity," in *Restoration Studies III*, ed. by Maurice Draper (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 52.

began to encounter challenges in expressing the mission and identity of the church in other cultures. The leadership under President W. Wallace Smith was realizing that society and history are continually in flux and the church must be prepared to respond with appropriate attention to mission and identity. Leading missionary outreach with the story of Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Epitome of Faith was no longer applicable for effective ministry.

Ministers under appointment were beginning to realize that their message must take into account the “predicament” of their audience and stop “providing answers to questions that people [weren’t] asking.”<sup>41</sup> Church leadership responded by opening up avenues to “discern the signs of the times” and “understand what the church is called to be and to do” in response to a dynamic society.<sup>42</sup> The Joint Council of the First Presidency and Council of Twelve worked together to formulate a “Statement on Objectives for the Church,” which was presented at the 1966 World Conference.

In conjunction with clarification of the theology of the church was a need to address the concept of Zion:

*Interpret the Zionite concept for our day in world terms and aggressively pursue the implementation of Zionite development. There is a great need to interpret concepts about the kingdom of God and Zionite communities in a worldwide context. Stakes should develop in many other parts of the world as well as in the Center Place, in order that there can be built the fullest possible economic and spiritual life for the membership. A study of basic theological foundations of the Zionite movement is prerequisite to implementation.*<sup>43</sup>

Historian Richard Howard opined that this statement was a “primal watershed for the RLDS Church” and “every substantive aspect of the church’s program development

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Neff, “What Shall We Teach?” *Saints Herald*, November 1, 1967, 7.

<sup>42</sup> “Statement on Objectives for the Church,” *World Conference Bulletin*, April 18, 1966, 238.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

since then has its roots in one or more of the objectives.”<sup>44</sup> Between the 1966 and 1968 World Conferences, a Joint Council Seminar program was initiated to bring church leadership into conversation with theologians, historians, and philosophers outside of the RLDS tradition. The purpose was to expand the knowledge of the church leadership beyond the story of Joseph Smith, Jr., and include the wider Christian community. The First Presidency stated that “only those able to adapt to continuous change can expect to find happiness.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the church *must* continually adapt to change in the world to stay relevant and alive. As a key distinctive in the theology of the RLDS Church, the concept of Zion was addressed at the report on the seminars to the conference body. The following is a portion of the statement shared:

Zion is seen as the corporate life of the faithful in communities wherever they may be. Zion is the underlying imperative wherever men are found and the call of Christ is experienced. The principles of stewardship, gathering, and cooperative action are the methodologies of achieving what is essentially the spiritual meaning of these relationships.<sup>46</sup>

To continue the development of the objectives outlined in 1966, a Basic Beliefs Committee was formed to compose statements on the theology and beliefs of the RLDS Church. As opposed to the image of a withdrawn community of Zion, the committee emphasized multiple signal communities united by the spirit of the Zionite endeavor and their message to the world.<sup>47</sup> Instead of being cut off from the world in a communitarian lifestyle, “Zion is the means by which the church speaks to society as it participates in the life of the world” and where “all of life is treated as sacred because it is known to be

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<sup>44</sup> Richard P Howard, *The Church Through the Years Volume 2: The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860-1992*, (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1993), 361.

<sup>45</sup> “Report of the First Presidency,” *World Conference Bulletin* (1968), 222.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>47</sup> “Basic Beliefs Series,” 33-34.

of God.”<sup>48</sup> It is from this statement that the church has moved forward in its concept of the Zionite endeavor in the last forty-six years of the church.

Theological development continued as the church moved through the leadership of W. Wallace and into a new era under the leadership of President-Emeritus Wallace B. Smith. New vision statements were formulated by the Joint Council in 1989 as a “new mandate for the 1990s,” inviting “local churches to adapt its meanings to particular situations.”<sup>49</sup> The World Church Vision Statement affirmed the principles of Zion that had been established in previous generations and presented the following beliefs and ideals: “That the promise of God’s kingdom shall be fulfilled...a vision of that kingdom...where God’s will is done on earth, where the hungry are fed, poverty is alleviated, sinners repentant, and sin is forgiven...that the opportunity to grow in the likeness of Christ should be fostered...a vision of a time when all evil is overcome and peace prevails.”<sup>50</sup>

With the leadership of President-Emeritus W. Grant McMurray and current President Steve Veazey came renewed efforts to re-evaluate the cause of Zion and its place in the mission of the church. The vision of Zion moved further away from the exclusive gathering of the church in the Center Place to a symbol of the church’s mission for the future.

### **Zion as Symbol and Mission**

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>49</sup> Howard, *The Church Through the Years*, 374.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 375.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 163 offers these words on the hope of Zion in the church today:

You are called to create pathways in the world for peace in Christ to be in the world for peace in Christ to be relationally and culturally incarnate. The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness. Above all else, strive to be faithful to Christ's vision of the peaceable kingdom of God on earth. Courageously challenge cultural, political, and religious trends that are contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God. Pursue peace.<sup>51</sup>

The journey of the Restoration movement to becoming Community of Christ has led leaders and members alike to conclude that the vision of Zion as an isolated, communitarian society is not only unrealistic but harmful to the mission of the church. It prevents effective outreach, particularly on an international level, by presenting the only route to salvation as uprooting oneself and one's family to move to a location in the middle of the United States regardless of financial means. It sets church members up for disappointment if they are unable to "gather" to the Center Place, or worse if they gather and the grand vision of Zion does not come to fruition in their lifetime. Like Fred M. Smith, they will leave this life viewing Zion as a beautiful dream and bitter disappointment. The cause to establish the kingdom of God on earth in our daily lives should be a creative vision for Christians as they seek to express Zion in different locations and times; instead, the vision is limited by the idea of singular community and location.<sup>52</sup>

Instead of expressing a vision of insular community, the cause of Zion now "captures the sense of divine call to en flesh the gospel in community living, through which the physical and spiritual needs of people are to be met, and through which

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<sup>51</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a-b.

<sup>52</sup> Geoffrey F. Spencer, "Symbol and Process: An Exploration into the Concept of Zion," in *Restoration Studies I*, ed. by Maurice Draper (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House 1980), 279.

harmony, security, and peace can be realized.”<sup>53</sup> Today, the ideal Zionite community infuses life with the peace of Jesus Christ and calls Christians to dwell together with love, acceptance, unity, generosity, peacefulness, and a desire to serve others. This creative vision has developed from the interpretation of the cause of Zion as a symbol of the mission of Community of Christ. C. Robert Mesle hit the proverbial nail on the head when he stated, “In the modern world...we will best empower the symbols of Zion and the kingdom if we continue to help our members understand that they *are* symbols, calls, and challenges to create our own visions and are not the names of a city waiting to descend from heaven above.”<sup>54</sup>

Zion as symbol points to the ultimate goal, a vision that we can uphold as an ideal to which we are continually striving and “will never settle for anything less, but we will not be disappointed if all our hopes are not realized when we would like them to be.”<sup>55</sup> Zion points to a future that all are currently experiencing part of and working to create for the generations to come. Theologian Geoffrey Spencer encourages us that “we should not be afraid to describe as Zionite those experiences and activities which witness the love and power of God’s coming kingdom.”<sup>56</sup> Too often the previous efforts of the church to establish Zion, such as those in Nauvoo, Kirtland, and Far West, have been swept under the rug of history as embarrassing failures for what *did not* occur. We should instead honor the history of Community and Christ and look at what the church *did* accomplish in these efforts: “they drained the swamps, fed the people, tamed the wilds –

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen M. Veazey, “Share the Peace of Jesus Christ,” 2005 World Conference Sermon, <http://www.cofchrist.org/presidency/sermons/wc2005Veazey-sermon.asp>.

<sup>54</sup> Mesle, “Zion and the Future of the RLDS Church,” 37.

<sup>55</sup> Spencer, “Symbol and Process: An Exploration into the Concept of Zion,” 280.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

in disciplined faithfulness to the Zionite call to incarnate a vision.”<sup>57</sup> Community of Christ should look to the dedication of the early church members as an example of what it means to incarnate the vision of Zion in faith and hope of a better future.

The cause of Zion also encompasses the spiritual development of Christians active in the world. Community of Christ is called to “intentional spiritual formation that centers us in the presence of God, where we find inner peace.”<sup>58</sup> Spiritual formation that allows us to be open to Zion as a symbol and a process that “allows us to express the concept of an ever increasing response to the revelation of God in Christ” in “communities in which persons are mutually committed with Christ to assist in the reconciling acts of God.”<sup>59</sup> These communities represent and signal the peace of God on earth by incarnating the mission of the church:

Signal communities positively deviate from trends and conditions in society that are contrary to God’s will for creation. They reveal a way of living that is a glimpse, demonstration, foothold, or foretaste of the peaceable reign of God on earth. Such communities provide a shining witness that the hope of the gospel is not wishful idealism. Conditions in creation can become better, more harmonious, and peaceful when we give tangible expression to the vision of Christ.<sup>60</sup>

It is in this way that Zion can be present in any location or time as long as the true Community of Christ is committed to the cause of Zion and the incarnation of God’s peaceable kingdom on earth.

### Concluding Thoughts

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<sup>57</sup> W. Paul Jones, “Theological Re-Symbolization of the RLDS Tradition: The Call to a Stage Beyond Demythologizing,” in *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 16 (1996): 11.

<sup>58</sup> Veazey, “Share the Peace of Jesus Christ.”

<sup>59</sup> Spencer, “Symbol and Process: An Exploration into the Concept of Zion,” 282.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen M. Veazey, “Signal Communities: The Hope of Zion,” 2008 Peace Colloquy Address, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Signal-Communities-Veazey-2008.pdf>.

In February 2016, Zion was in Pensacola, Florida. During the evening hours of February 23, 2016, weather conditions developed that produced the first tornado seen in Escambia County in 45 years. Zion was present in the innumerable prayers raised by and for those in the path of the storm. Zion was present as neighbors came together to clear debris from roads and yards, and patch holes in roofs with tarp. Zion was present in a Community of Christ congregation that prepared enormous amounts of spaghetti and delivered hot meals to a neighborhood without power. Without thought of repayment or reward, the residents of Pensacola came together and created a small, peaceable community that could rightly be called Zion. It did not take a lot of money or forethought. It grew organically from the hearts and faith of residents and neighbors in need. It grew out of love, faith, and hope.

It is to this vision of community that the founders of Community of Christ sought to create out of faithfulness to gospel of Jesus Christ and the desire to live out the values and principles of the gospel message. It is to this vision of community that current and future members of Community of Christ are called to today. This vision will change as society changes and the church expands into new corners of the world. Community of Christ is called to change with society and the natural course of history, and to uphold the symbol of Zion as an experience of the present and a hope for the future. “The mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead.”<sup>61</sup> Let us join together across generations and continents to proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace for all to see!

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<sup>61</sup> *Sharing in Community of Christ*, 8.

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On the Higher Life movement, see Waldvogel, "The "Overcoming Life"; and Bundy, David, "Keswick and the Experience of Evangelical Piety," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, eds. Blumhofer, Edith L. and Balmer, Randall (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 118-44. 6. Several of the essays in *Caring and Curing* provide information on turn-of-the-century Christian healing practices. For newspaper reports on Catholic healings from the early 1880s, for example, see the following articles in the *New York Times*: "The Knock Mortar Miracle," 20 07 1880, 2; "The Lourdes Miracles Again," 13 01. The history of Community of Christ, formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, covers a period of approximately 200 years. The church's early history traces to the "grove experience" of Joseph Smith, who prayed in the woods near his home in Palmyra, New York, in the early-19th century. Several accounts of this experience have surfaced over the years. Most of the accounts share a common narrative indicating that when he went to the woods to pray, he experienced a of Christ; Zion is the central physical location to which Latter Day Saints have gathered; the term has been applied to Kirtland, Ohio; Jackson County, Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and the Salt Lake Valley; Zion is also, according to Joseph Smith, the entire continent of America. Joseph Smith stated that "the whole of America is Zion itself from north to south." A modern-day proponent of the Mormon fundamentalist movement, Ogden Kraut, summarized the fundamentalist/dissident position on "Zion" as follows: The Saints failed to live the higher laws in the center stake of Zion in Missouri so they were expelled. During the four years at Nauvoo, there was not even an attempt to live the United Order, for example, so they were again driven out.