

A Hopeful Future Awaits

Now is the time for our courage to make it reality.

Adapted from a sermon delivered by Apostle Janné Grover to the Central USA Mission Center Conference in November 2023.

Beloved children of the Restoration, your continuing faith adventure with God has been divinely led, eventful, challenging, and sometimes surprising to you. By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church [and creation].

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9, adapted

President Steve Veazey affirmed in his closing address to the 2023 World Conference:

Community of Christ has a hopeful future of continuing adventure with God, if we choose it! But make no mistake, choosing the future God envisions will require discernment, courage, sacrifice, generosity, flexibility, and creativity. An important aspect of this part of our journey is to discern God's redemptive activity in the world today, our role in it, and characteristics needed for future leadership.

The importance of our recent collective discernment is not just about one leader; it is about the active "futuring" of the church according to God's vision for the church and creation. This active futuring asks something of us now. It will take:

- Courage to walk with Jesus, the peaceful One, and boldly live as Christ's new creation.
- Sacrifice of our natural fear of spiritual and relational transformation and comfortable sense of "us-ness" as we reimagine spiritual gatherings and more authentic ways of being communities of Christ.
- Generosity and whole-life stewardship dedicated to expanding the church's restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the Worth of All Persons, the Sacredness of Creation, and the relieving of physical and spiritual suffering. This is our call to love God and neighbor in effective ways.
- A posture of flexibility and creativity to help us see with fresh vision the future-oriented movement we have always been.

President Veazey reminds us that discernment does not mean we take a "wait and see" attitude. We

must walk courageously with Jesus, the peaceful One, and pay attention to insights that emerge as we respond and reflect on our ministry experiences.

This discernment process has held diverse voices and perspectives—some seeking change, some with strong convictions of their own discernment, but all seeking a future of hope for the church. I have been preaching about this hopeful future that awaits our choosing.

Through discernment, courage, sacrifice, generosity, flexibility, and creativity we will become more authentically Christ-centered communities of spiritual formation, compassionate ministry, and action. Perhaps in doing so I have only enabled the waiting. Our hopeful future must be lived now.

We are moving from a Restored movement and structure to a Restoration movement more fully dedicated to God's vision for creation. Gospel imperatives of restoring persons, communities, and Earth to healthy relationships with God and others are not for the sake of our institutional well-being, but for the blessing and healing of Earth; for creating safe, brave space of sanctuary for all persons—regardless of life circumstance and regardless of partisan political affiliation.

If we are serious about being authentic, Christ-centered, welcoming, and affirming communities of generosity, justice, and peacefulness dedicated to the healing of Earth as a gospel and Restoration imperative, we already will be living the hopeful future we seek! It is not after Bridge of Hope, it is not after we have shored up the endowments, it is not after we name a new prophet-president.

It is now! Let us not be so focused on what is not that we waste the hope of what God is up to now.

You are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church and creation. ...The challenges and opportunities are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadow of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision?

—Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a, e

I believe with every assurance that our hopeful future is now, if we choose it, and if we courageously live it into being!

