



This is the last in a series of messages recorded by President Steve Veazey. To watch the videos, go to [www.youtube.com/user/CofChrist](http://www.youtube.com/user/CofChrist). English, French and Spanish versions are available. The purpose of this series is to describe major opportunities and challenges before the church.

### CONTINUE TO BRING THE TEMPLE TO LIFE

See photos and depictions of the Temple in Independence on buildings, in homes, and on banners and clothing throughout the church. The Temple in Independence is a powerful, unifying symbol of the church. It highlights Christ's ministries of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit. It inspires us to become living temples or sanctuaries of Christ's peace wherever we live.

The Holy Spirit is urging us to continue to bring the Temple to life. Words of counsel to the church in 2019 state:

Beloved in Christ, for many years you longed for a temple to fulfill the hopes of generations. Now there is a Temple seeking fulfillment through a worldwide community that embodies divine light, generosity, and peace. Being a people of the Temple is a constant calling that finds creative expression through each generation.

Many inspiring experiences have occurred in and

through the Temple in Independence. Examples are:

- The Daily Prayer for Peace that now is practiced in many congregations and at other church events.
- An international youth gathering spontaneously singing "Humble Yourselves Before the Lord" as an expression of unity in Christ.
- Singing "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning" with more gusto than I have ever heard before at the launch of Community of Christ Sings at the Temple.
- Numerous peace colloquies and granting of International Peace Awards.
- The vibrancy of the African-led ordination service at the 2019 World Conference.
- Special worship, spiritual formation, and community-building ministries coordinated by the Center for Living Water.
- Personal, congregational, and mission center Temple pilgrimages.

The Temple heightens spiritual awareness. Awhile back a church member told me that he had heard "the ancestors singing from the Temple balcony" during

a small group worship service in the Temple. Such experiences are mystical, deeply personal, and beyond explanation.

The Temple expresses the soul of Community of Christ and shapes our prophetic vision. A challenge has been how to meaningfully connect groups around the world with Temple ministries. Geographic and communications barriers have limited the Temple's full effect. However, online technology can help overcome these barriers.

Temple ministries that could be available through online connections include virtual multi-cultural worships with participants around the world, spiritual formation retreats, disciple, priesthood, and leader formation events, field-based peace colloquies, and networking to support forming local communities of peace, justice, and invitation.

What will it take in terms of personnel, volunteers, and other support for the entire church to contribute to and experience Temple ministries through online technology?

The Temple is beckoning the church into the future as it enriches understanding of "the essential meaning of the Restoration as healing and redeeming agent... inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 156:5e). Continuing to bring the Temple to life is a major aspect of our metamorphosis as we seek to follow Jesus Christ, the peaceful One!

The divine call to continue to bring the Temple to life to transform the whole church is essential and applies to all of us! We each have an important role to play no matter where we live. To become a people of the Temple requires all of us to be on the spiritual journey to which the Temple calls us and seeks to equip us.

How are you feeling called to support continuing to bring the Temple to life? What opportunities for Temple Ministries participation through online technology would you like to experience? Send comments to fp@CofChrist.org.

## YOU ARE THE PLAN!

"What is the strategic plan for the church?" I can offer material that answers this question. However, my basic response is: "You are the church's strategic plan" or, better yet, "We are the church's strategic plan!"

God's plan of redemption and restoration is incarnation. Incarnation is the Eternal Word becoming flesh in Jesus Christ so that it dwells through communities of disciples that embody Christ's ministry. In other words, all the dreaming, discerning, and doing of ministries locally and globally, as guided by the Holy Spirit, are the essential elements of God's vision as expressed through the church.

It is vital that we get this concept! We are God's way of redeeming and transforming the world. Whom we become in Christ and what we share of our giftedness and resources is how the reign of God expands on Earth.

There is no detailed plan that can substitute for communities of disciples and friends discerning and

living Christ's mission together daily.

Clarity we seek about the future will come as we journey together in response to guidance of the Holy Spirit and befriend all we meet along the way. Remember the Samaritan who had the courage to see as God sees and respond as God would to the wounded traveler (Luke 10: 25-37)?

Recently, I was reminded of an old fable. One day an elephant was walking down a road. It saw a hummingbird lying in the road with its tiny feet pointed into the air. "What are you doing, little bird?" boomed the elephant. The bird replied, "I heard the sky might fall today, so, I am ready to help hold it up, should that happen."

The elephant trumpeted a laugh that echoed off the hills and said, "Little bird, do you really think those spindly legs could help hold up the sky?" The bird responded, "Well, not alone. But in a situation like this, one must do what one can do. And this is what I can do!"

In some cultural versions of the story, the elephant reflects briefly, then carefully lies down near the bird and points its massive legs toward the sky, too! And, in yet more versions, other animals curious about this surprising sight gather asking, "What are you doing?" and "Can we help, too?"

One time I took our granddaughter, Bailey, who was seven at the time, with me to my office on Take Your Daughter (granddaughter) to Work Day. I set up a little table for her to use for her "office work," which was mostly drawing and coloring. She produced an amazing picture of the Temple.

Later I invited her to sit with me as we explored the World Church website and talked about the church. Then we looked up her family in the Ministry Information System (Shelby). We zeroed in on her name. By her name was the term "friend" since she was not yet baptized and confirmed. She looked at the screen and then at me with puzzlement as she repeated the word "friend." Then she said, "But Grandpa, I want to be more than that!"

Bailey was experiencing the stirring of Christ's call to discipleship and whole-life commitment that has now continued through her baptism, confirmation, and continued growth as an active church member.

What about you? Do you sense the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to keep growing in discipleship and ministry, to be "more than that" at this point in your life?

Ruth Haley Barton in her book, *Life Together in Christ*, observes that Spiritual transformation takes place incrementally over time with others in the context of disciplines and practices that open us to God. In general, while we are still on Earth, our transformation will happen by degrees (2 Corinthians 3:18), and we need each other to grow (1 Corinthians 12).

These are unsettling, disruptive, demanding, and opportune times! We can allow ourselves to be paralyzed by uncertainty and conflict, or we can keep growing and transforming in Christ as we respond to opportunities and challenges.

Let's be and do all we can to move into the future with courage, creativity, and commitment. Let's surprise ourselves and others as we grow in love, faith, ministry, invitation, generosity, and bold action with God.

