



ESPECIAL WITNESSES

The Seventy Newsletter

New Year, New Hope, New Opportunities

By John S. Wight, Senior President of Seventy

In many ways, January 1 is just another day. It is sometimes hard to understand why people around the world celebrate the beginning of a new year so vigorously. However, it is a symbol of newness and of hope for the future. We can celebrate for a day and then get back to our normal lives. Or we can use this symbol that we have recently experienced to rekindle our fire as especial witnesses and forerunners of Christ's peace.

The combination of our Mission Statement (<http://www.cofchrist.org/ourfaith/mission.asp>), Enduring Principles (<http://www.cofchrist.org/ourfaith/enduring-principles.asp>), and Mission Initiatives (<http://www.cofchrist.org/mission/>) provide us with a wonderful focus and framework for rekindled ministry. It is also a captivating message of hope we can share with persons who are going through yet another new year without knowing that joy, hope, love and peace of Jesus Christ. It is also a message that seems to catch the attention of those already engaged in a faith community and seekers alike.

I recently had the opportunity to share the Mission Initiatives with a lady who works for a Catholic church in Kansas City, Missouri (USA). She is heavily involved in the good works that congregation is doing, especially in the area of social justice. I did not see her as a potential invitee to involvement in Community of Christ, but I wanted to share with her who we are and what we do. She was excited to hear the Mission Initiatives. The fact that there are others "out there" striving to bring Kingdom principles into the lives of people seemed to give her hope.

Not long after this experience, I struck up a conversation with the chef at a restaurant where I was eating with several colleagues. We made a connection as we learned that we had both lived in Chicago, Illinois (USA) and had similar tastes in sports. I eventually asked if he had a church home to which he replied, "No, I don't." I invited him and then gave him my card which has the Mission Initiatives on the back. He began to read through them and seemed genuinely interested. Before parting ways, he thanked me three times for the invitation. Will I ever see Eric in church? Who knows? God has wonderful ways of working with the seeds we are given the opportunity to plant. Whether or not I ever see him again, I experienced the joy of sharing the invitation to Jesus Christ within the context of this fellowship we know as Community of Christ.

As a seventy, you know the joy of sharing your witness and inviting people to Christ. If you are having great success and seeing many, many people respond to your witness and invitation, more power to you. May the spirit of the new year fan the flames of your heart and keep you going strong. If, on the other hand, you are feeling discouraged and ineffective, may the spirit of the new year remind you of the new life and the hope that we have to share with people throughout the world! Regardless of where each of us may find ourselves, may we let this symbol of new beginnings unite us as a team in our common mission to "Invite People to Christ, Baptize/Confirm Many New People, Open New Congregations, (and) Launch the Church in New Nations!"

Happy new invitations!!

Knowing Your Neighbor

We had a man from a TV station in Moscow at our Wednesday meeting. This person was producing a special movie documentary titled "Positive People of Russia". He was filming our discussions and role-plays. Our role-play was to help people learn how to treat their opponent (someone they are in conflict with) as "your neighbor" or "someone close to you". We are physically and emotionally interconnected and we can choose how we interact with others we come in contact with. We can be in conflict or choose to treat the person as our friend or close relative.

We can choose to attend to this person's needs just as you normally attend the needs of your closest relative or friend. We can choose to not focus on the problems the person caused us, but rather treating them as a PARTNER God sent to you in this place and in this time. Maybe this person smells bad or their manners are not perfect. Are our friends always perfect? Obviously we all have issues and short comings. Sounds strange, but this is a very effective technique in reality.

The last time I had a traffic accident with one man (Alexander) it was a pretty intense and stressful situation. When I was getting out from my car that was stuck in the ditch, I chose to shake away all my anger and frustration and in ten steps refocused my attitude and intentions. "What is your name?" I asked and after getting the answer I told him that we are partners now and I am ready to call my technical service to help him with HIS car. Luckily my approach worked well in this situation and Alexander even drove me the next day to the Traffic Police Department to fill out necessary papers. I strongly feel this is a practical approach that I learned from Jesus... I told the TV producer about this accident and he responded that this is very unusual and most people shout and even fight in these cases. He agreed that this was worth sharing and being placed in the documentary.

Yesterday I was very happy despite all my health problems!

Your Russian friend,
Sergei



Community of Christ

A Gallery of Some Recent Seventy Ordinations



Tim Beavers of Michigan (USA) ordained by President of Seventy John Wight, left, and Seventy Richard Hawks.



Tom Cochran of Missouri (USA) ordained by Seventy Carole Price, left, and Apostle Stassi Cramm.

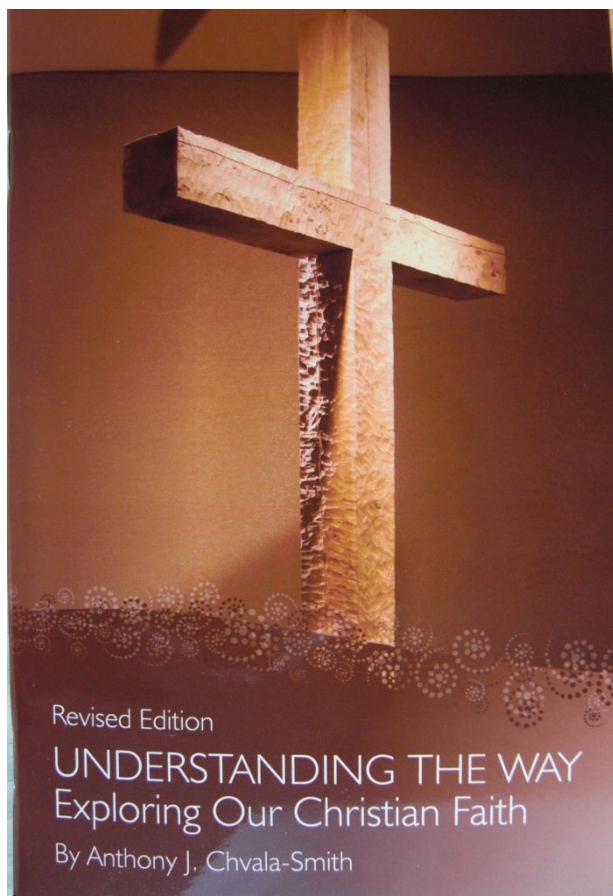


Manuel Ramos of Dominican Republic ordained by Apostle Rick Maupin, left, and President of Seventy Ruben Landeros.



Rick Mac Gregor of Michigan (USA) is ordained by President of Seventy John Wight, left, and Seventy Richard Hawks.

New Edition of *Understanding the Way Available*



A revised edition of Tony Chvala-Smith's book, "Understanding the Way" (English) has been released by Herald House. It includes some minor editorial changes and an additional chapter titled "Baptized into Servanthood; Ministry and Priesthood".

It is recommended that all seventies you use the English version of the missionary resources obtain a copy of this new book to update their Missionary Tool Kits. It can be ordered from Herald House at 800-767-8181 or online at:

<http://www.heraldhouse.org/cart/edit.asp?p=312647>

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Quorum Updates

New Seventies

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following individuals who have accepted calls and/or been ordained since our last newsletter:

Pedro R. Mercado-Macias	Morelos, Mexico
Daniel B. "Dan" Murphy	Oregon, USA
Sarah E. Steinberg	Maryland, USA

New Ministry Opportunities

We would like to recognize with appreciation the years of ministry as seventy given by Connie Marie Lane of Minnesota, USA and Loretha Mae Smith of Michigan, USA who were ordained to the office of Evangelist and John G. VanDerWalker who was ordained to the office of High Priest.

In Memoriam

We also want to recognize and honor the many years of ministry as a seventy given by James "Jim" Morgan, Sr. of Michigan, USA who passed away recently.

Awareness

As Our Mission Conference concluded its 8th year in Canada West, I felt ecstatic with not the personal weavings of personalities gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, nor the great worship services, nor the wonderful singing and fabulous classes but with 4 gentle souls who “got it”. My past 7 years as Mission Centre President of CWM kept me so focused on the mechanics of the weekend that I just didn’t observe those quiet folks who probably had been doing their “behind the scenes ministry” all along. This Conference, in my new role as Invitational Minister (Missionary Coordinator), I was able to visit, listen and observe the membership in such a way that I had longed for, for some time. As I sat out under a canopied tent in front of Vancouver congregation’s host home for the weekend conference and listened to the gentle music of a classical guitarist and enjoyed the fellowship of those around me, I saw it happen with clarity.

A lady with her disabled son was pushing his wheelchair down the street in front of the church past those outside fellowshiping and she paused on several occasions to look our direction first at the people visiting, then at the signage of the weekend’s events and finally at the guitarist. I paused a moment in my conversation with a friend and said to Nancy sitting beside me, “see that lady and child ... they have looked at all of us three times as she slowly walked by us”.

This was all Nancy needed! She leapt out of her chair as if it were electrified and headed for the lady who was now past the church on her walk. Within a couple of moments Nancy reappeared with the lady and her son to introduce them to us sitting under the tent. Their strong Chinese accent made each of us pay even greater attention to what she was saying as we slowly talked as to why we were sitting out front of the church. I slowly excused myself from the conversation and mingled through the group outside and found one of the members who belonged to the congregation, who I knew I could count on to come and join our conversation, one who was also gentle in his speech and loving in his approach.

Jim without hesitation or direction came over and introduced himself to the visitor and in due time invited them to worship with us the next a.m. for the worship. The following morning in the creative worship service led by Jeannie Davis, there was an opportunity to have those assembled to pray for the needs of the gathered congregation and their friends. I heard Jim sharing about our lady and her child and with a sense of admiration for Jim, glanced back to hear him talking about our friends last night, under the tent. To my great joy, they were sitting with Jim for that service of worship basking in the love of this event.

Immediately after the service of worship, I saw Nancy who was in conversation with someone else, shared with her of these folks being present with us, she immediately excused herself to go and greet the lady and her son once again. I felt like a proud father who had just witnessed his son taking his first steps as I witnessed with joy the weaving to two wonderful people, Nancy and Jim, who “got it” in terms of sharing unobtrusively with those who were strangers and who were now friends.

Twice more that weekend I witnessed two others who were walking by our tent on the Saturday and walking by our gathering at Stanley Park on Sunday’s outdoor closing worship service. Marie had observed that a mom and little girl from down the street had heard the guitar music waffling into the neighborhood and ever-so gently went to them and told them about our weekend’s events and of our piñata evening that night for the little children. They stayed for a period of time listening to the music and enjoying the tender fellowship of Marie. That evening as I reflected with Jim my appreciation for his gentleness of welcoming that afternoon he indicated that the Marie’s, Mom and daughter had also come to the piñata evening’s event. Once again, Jim as a local member had also witnessed these strangers in the midst of our large gathering and had welcomed them once again to the evening’s event. Marie’s tender spirit was instrumental in them coming back that evening. Sunday night was also similar when I saw Madeline walking up to a “stranger” in the park

who was standing off to one side of our group enjoying the music and the words as Pastor Chris was involving the group in a sing-along. My heart burned with joy once again as I saw this and also reflected on the weekends events were four members from across the Mission who were not gregarious in their personalities like we tend to think our membership needs to be in opportunities of sharing with “strangers” but simply 4 quiet spoken members who were aware that someone was observing our group at Mission Conference. They sensed the need of hospitality to simply walk up to these folks, share what we were doing, listened to the guest’s story and to invite them to join us. Once again, I felt like a proud Dad as I witnessed these events unfolding before me.

Witnessing, evangelism, missionary work is only ecclesiastical nomenclature for the reality of caring, listening and inviting. One doesn’t have to feel intimidated about the opportunities of verbiage, but simply challenged to listen to the gentle voice within to look and observe one’s surrounding and in the spirit of friendliness be welcoming. I praise God for the Marie’s, Madeline, Jim’s and Nancy’s of our congregations who are quiet by nature, gentle and tender souls who are willing to respond to their surroundings.

Darrell Belrose

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*"To accelerate the work of sharing the gospel,
the Twelve and the Seventy should be closely associated
in implementing wholistic evangelistic ministries.
The seventy are to be the forerunners of Christ's peace,
preparing the way for apostolic witness
to be more readily received."*

–Doctrine and Covenants 163:5b

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Relationally and Culturally Incarnate: New Opportunities to Witness

by Robin Linkhart, president of seventy

Community of Christ does not proselyte faithful, active members of other faiths. Instead, we seek fellowship and dialogue with all people. In recent years we find increasing opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with sisters and brothers of Restoration heritage, especially disaffected Latter-day Saints.

In the model of our Master, we invite all who are heavy laden, disenchanted, frustrated, or lost to come and see what God can do for their lives in Community of Christ. In that spirit, we invite disaffected Latter-day Saints to consider the Restoration anew. Before they leave the Restoration, or Christianity altogether, we invite our friends to consider our offer of sanctuary and to experience the peace of God in Community of Christ.

As a people, Community of Christ recognizes our responsibility to become sensitive and knowledgeable about the needs Latter-day Seekers have as they journey to find how God is calling them to live out their discipleship. In response, Apostle Dale Luffman chairs the Latter-day Seekers Initiative Team, a group uniquely equipped to assist our effort to offer sanctuary. All Seventy and

missionary elders are encouraged to request this team to come to your mission center for a training and orientation session in order that you and your congregations can be equipped with the skills and tools associated with this ministry initiative. This is one way the Seventy can be more intentional in our witness with disaffected LDS seekers.

Opportunities for mission ministry abound across our world. Keith McMillan (Quorum 3 Eurasia Mission Field) reports over twenty different ministries taking place including seeker groups learning together and several baptisms. Other similar connections are happening in Canada, (Kris Judd Quorum 9), Central and Middle USA (John Wight Quorum 10), Western USA (Robin Linkhart Quorum 6), New York (Larry McGuire Quorum 4), and Southeast USA (Karin Peter Quorum 5).

“You are called to create pathways 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”, Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a.

For additional information visit www.latter-dayseekers.org or contact: Dale Luffman (dluffman@cofchrist.org) or Robin Linkhart (rlinkhart@cofchrist.org).

HOW MUCH TIME DO WE SPEND WITH OUR SHOES OFF?

by Bob Kyser

Reflect with me for a few moments on the following quotations:

A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what is going on inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.

*Parker Palmer, as quoted by Ruth Hailey Barton,
Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, p. 48*

God’s will for us is generally for us to do more of that which gives us life (John 10:10) and to turn away from those things that drain life from us and debilitate us.”

Ruth Hailey Barton, p. 67

*Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning as quoted by Ruth Hailey Barton, p. 64

There is a message for me personally in these three comments:

First, being a seventy, minister, church leader definitely has more to do with giving attention to my inner being, my soul, my spirit...than anything else.

Secondly, life is mostly about *being* with the *doing* coming as a result.

Thirdly, the daily questions for me to answer are: “At the end of the day, is my life drain or replenished? and “ How much time do I spend with my shoes off?

In my current role as pastor to the staff of the church, I see more and more people experiencing life that is drained and debilitated. It can happen to any of us when we are not true to ourselves and the real disciple God has called us to become. To live a life “afire with God” requires us to

give attention to our spiritual formation. Spiritual formation invites us to “create a space in which God can act in our lives.” (Henri Nouwen).

As we begin this new year, let us be upfront with the impact the pressures and stress of life and ministry bring to us and what we are doing to care for the well being of our spirit. I invite you to take this little test.

Give yourself one point for each positive answer:

1. I go to my doctor and dentist at least once a year for an examination.
2. I take most of my vacation each year.
3. I have a person (spiritual companion) I trust and can confide in. I visit with this person regularly.
4. I take time most days for prayer, scripture reflection, writing, meditation or other spiritual practice.
5. I take time each week for myself and my family.
6. I see a professional counselor.
7. I spend time each year away for spiritual renewal.
8. I do not try to make excuses for not doing any of the above—like “I am too busy.”

The purpose of this exercise is not to feel good or guilty about our score. Rather, it is to acknowledge the positive steps we are already taking and add at least one more step to be implemented in the near future. To achieve the life balance I am talking about requires much more than a positive response to all of the above. It requires an order to our life and ministry.

Henri Nouwen in his article “Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry” declares that “Jesus established the true order for spiritual work.” He uses Luke 6:12-19 as the scriptural model shared by Jesus as he first spent extended time in prayer (solitude) then called those who were to go with him (community) and finally went to preach, teach, heal (ministry) those who were waiting. The order of the steps taken by Jesus is critical. From solitude comes the wholistic strength to engage with other disciples in mission. Too often I have tried to go directly to ministry/mission by myself and without adequate time alone with God.

Another author reflecting on life balance and the true meaning of calling states:

Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world.
Parker Palmer in Let Your Life Speak

So, here is the treasure—taking time for self makes us a much better seventy, minister, disciple, friend, family member. It is not a matter of compromising our roles and tasks by taking time away for spiritual formation. Time away is the key to all that other institutional stuff. I believe God wants with all God’s might to be with us and for us to be with God. When we create space in our lives in which to encounter and be with God, when we take off our shoes and stop just eating the blackberries, then my friends will the kingdom come in us and through us to others.

As I write this article I am preparing to accept my call to the ministry of evangelist. I have a strong testimony of the divinity of this call, while facing the emotions of my “leaving” the quorums of seventy. I want to express my appreciation to each of my sisters and brothers in the seventy for the privilege of being engaged in mission with you. I pray the words above will bring encouragement and blessing as we continue the journey together.