



# Community of Christ

CHRIST'S MISSION, OUR MISSION

19 August, 2019

## Love Overcomes Nauvoo Floods

In the end, the rising Mississippi River wasn't strong enough to overcome the love of dedicated staff members and volunteers who protected the Joseph Smith Historic Site from spring and summer floods.

Because of their sweat, dedication, and passion, no severe damage was done to historic properties in Nauvoo, Illinois. That's not to say there wasn't lots of worrying.

Apostle Lach Mackay, Community of Christ Historic Sites director, said the concerns began with March blizzards in the upper Midwest. The worry didn't dissipate until the US Army Corps of Engineers said in mid-July that it was safe to remove flood-prevention structures.

"For several months, heavy rain in the middle of the night meant getting up and starting the gasoline-powered pumps that supplement the electric pumping system for the Nauvoo House cellar," Mackay said. "Once started, we had to put on life jackets and scale the levee to inspect the hoses and make sure they were not cutting through the plastic protecting the levee from erosion. We would also need to refuel the pumps as needed."

The five pumps and plastic weren't the only protective efforts. Workers used 125 tons of sand to fill hundreds of white, nylon bags and provide other protection.

Volunteers included members of the Community of Christ RV Association, World Conference delegates passing through Nauvoo on the way to Independence, Missouri, USA, and 25 sister missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Combined, they raised the levee by two feet.

"We are extremely grateful for all of the help we received," Mackay said. Others agreed.

"When the river rises, we need all hands on deck in Nauvoo," said Barbara Walden, executive director of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Association. "The more hands, the greater the efforts at preserving the historic structures, family cemetery, and landscapes along the river. The tireless efforts of the volunteers and staff are appreciated by current and future generations."

Added Karen Graham Wade, foundation president: "A mere 'thank you' can never express our deep gratitude for their efforts in preserving this sacred place."

The historic site remained open throughout, but Mackay said several bridges closed, forcing visitors to take creative routes to reach Nauvoo.

Unfortunately, this drill has become increasingly frequent.

"Two of the four highest flood crests on record occurred in 2019, and five of the top 10 crests have occurred since...2007," Mackay said. "The 2019 flood also broke the record for the longest duration, a record that had stood since the great flood of 1927."

All that water emphasized an enduring truth: "Natural emergencies," Mackay said, "seem to bring out the best in people."