

Spiritual Awakening

"The Holy Spirit is alive among us."

This is adapted from the June 5 evening service at 2025 World Conference, inspired by Acts 2:43-47—Pentecost (June 8).

Stassi Cramm, **First Presidency:** What an incredible World Conference experience we've shared so far!

I don't know about you, but I have felt an undeniable outpouring of God's presence—moving through worship, conversation, legislation, and those unexpected moments of grace.

The Holy Spirit is *alive* among us.

And yet, as we gather in this powerful moment, we do so with full awareness that the past several years have been profoundly difficult. We carry with us the *wounds* from those challenges—grief, uncertainty, and the lingering effects of hard decisions. There is still *healing* to be done within the body of Christ. But friends, what brings us to this moment...is not chance.

We are here because of the intricate weaving of a divine story—God's story—a story that stretches across generations. Ours is a journey threaded into the great tapestry of God's work through time. We are connected to the disciples who walked before us. Just as they faced storms of doubt, persecution, and loss...so, too, have we navigated seasons that have tested our faith.

Since the 2023 World Conference, we've been walking through weighty realities. We've shouldered the responsibility of caring for those who gave their lives to ministry, as we met the church's retirement responsibilities—*while* also striving to ensure that Christ's mission can thrive into the future. The decision to sell Nauvoo, Kirtland, and other treasured artifacts—was heartbreaking to make, and devastating to hear. These places carry deep spiritual and historical meaning. Their sale created a deep sense of loss.

Even in the midst of heartache, we have witnessed *signs of hope*. The sacrifices made were not simply losses or business transactions. They were *investments*. Investments in the future. In faith. In mission. In the lives yet to be touched by Christ's peace. Friends...we are part of something sacred and still *unfolding*.

Hope is not something we stumble upon. Hope is something we *choose*. And our collective story reminds us: It is especially in the hardest times that choosing hope becomes an *act of faith*. An *act of courage*. Just like the disciples who experienced spiritual renewal at Pentecost, we are being called: To let go of what is comfortable. To open our hearts to what God is doing anew. This is a season of *holy risk*. A season of *possibility*—if we have the courage to trust where the Holy Spirit leads.

So tonight...let's return once more to the Pentecost story. As we listen to the early church's response to the Holy Spirit and stories of our response today, may we open ourselves to *new insight*—into how we are being called to live, to serve, and to *choose hope...as we step into the future together*.

Janné Grover, First Presidency: Acts 2:43 opens with spiritual awakening and wonder: "*A sense of awe came over everyone.*"

I invite you to close your eyes and imagine this community immersed in a Pentecost experience. When have you experienced a sense of awe this week? What is the Holy Spirit awakening in you? How is the Holy Spirit enlivening our community to new life and new possibilities? Open your eyes.

The Pentecost experience of the early church was a profound *spiritual awakening* and deep recognition of God's active presence. The invitation to spiritual awakening today enlivens us to new life in Christ and transforms how we see the world and how we engage in mission.

- We witness this spiritual awakening where ongoing *discernment* is a central leadership practice, awakening us to God's call and purpose, shaping vision, and guiding strategic mission plans;
- And wherever communities are *creating organic networks* that foster relationships, spiritual growth, and global connection.

Trusting what God is doing and what God will do, we must fan the flames wherever this spark is already igniting hope and enlivening new possibility.

Karin Peter, senior president of seventy: Acts 2:43b-44a: "God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united..."

Richard James, president, Council of Twelve Apostles: The spiritual awakening of the early church led to action, calling believers into mission together. What wonders might God be working through us if we, too, choose to trust and step forward in faith?

A young woman and her family move to central Spain with a desire to do something to help her community. God was stirring her heart. It was a spiritual awakening.

This time last year Apostle Carlos Mejia and I, along with others, met with Karina in her home. We listened to her story, felt her passion, and heard of her desire to serve. In that moment we said to her, “How do we make this happen?”

With God’s help and her initiative, she began with her immediate family and swiftly expanded to include twelve individuals. Then due to economic challenges and seasonal employment difficulties in February this year, finding work was problematic for the community. Consequently, with support from the mission center, we commenced providing regular meals to the community. One year later, this community had grown to fifty people, with eight confirmed members and additional baptisms planned in the coming months.

Hope is here! It is real for them and for us. See what has happened in one year. It shows what is possible when we trust and step forward in faith.

What will the Spirit awaken in us as we move forward in faith and confidence?

Karin Peter: Where will the Spirit lead?

It leads an individual to invite others to a spontaneous walking group. They walk, listen, and share their spiritual journeys.

It leads a family to invite other families into their home for scripture study, snacks, and conversation.

The Spirit leads young adults into new forms of ministry, incorporating technical skills, social media savvy, and a deep desire to experience authentic community.

It leads a retiree into neighborhood pastoral ministry, checking on neighbors, helping with difficult tasks and weekly chores, to listen, mourn, gather, and celebrate with them.

The Spirit leads a congregation to connect its

financial resources with another congregation’s people resources, partnering in new, shared mission opportunities.

It leads a mission center to make climate justice its mission focus, for leadership training, adult education, *and* the children’s vacation church school.

All these expressions are ways in which the Spirit is propelling us into new expressions of community, engaged in the mission of Christ.

Where is the Spirit leading you?

Bunda Chibwe, First Presidency: Acts 2:44b: “[All the believers] shared everything.”

Step into the living Spirit of Acts 2:44—not just as a memory of the early church, but as a call for us here and now.

I’m especially inspired by African theological voices that deepen my understanding of this scripture. They remind us: Life in the Spirit is always life together.

First, Archbishop Desmond Tutu taught that our humanity is intertwined. The early believers did not see others as “them,” but as “us.” They shared their possessions—and their lives—because their hearts were united.

Second, African communalism affirms this truth. As one African theologian wrote, “The individual does not and cannot exist alone.”

Third, the Holy Spirit moves us toward radical generosity. One African Liberation theologian says, “The Holy Spirit breaks the chains of inequality.” Acts 2:44 is not just about sharing—it’s about resisting the forces that divide us and proclaiming a new, just order shaped by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the African ethic of “pulling together” calls us into collective action—living faith through solidarity, mutual care, and hope.

I’ve witnessed this Spirit in African congregations during funerals, weddings, and the pandemic from those who live our Enduring Principle of Blessings of Community. This is the same Spirit that moved at Pentecost—and it’s still moving, calling us beyond individualism into true community.

Through scriptures like “in the welfare of others resides our welfare,” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a), Spirit-led generosity, and the ethic of pulling together,

African voices powerfully echo how the early Christians lived: “We are called not just to believe together, but to live together, share together, and be bound together in love.”

May the Holy Spirit keep pulling us together—until “all who believe” are truly one, and all things are shared for the glory of God.

Ron Harmon, presiding bishop: Acts 2:45: “They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them.”

I have always been deeply moved by the account in Acts 2 of the birth of the early church. This powerful example of radical generosity inspired the early Saints in Kirtland as they gathered together, sharing all things for the common good. Even in the face of hardship and struggle, their conviction only deepened as they sought to embody divine love in tangible ways within sacred community.

The Saints in Kirtland lived into God’s creative abundance—not an abundance that kept them from hard times, but one that gave them spiritual strength and helped them find “just enough” when the way forward was unclear. They broke bread together, prayed together, supported each other, and cared for one another’s needs as if they were their own.

Simplicity became the spiritual discipline that opened them to divine grace and made them more receptive to God’s abundant presence. It gave them the freedom to let go of the pull of everyday culture and focus on what truly mattered most for the blessing of all.

This spirit of generosity and abundance is deeply rooted in scripture—from the creation story to the Exodus wilderness, through the Levitical practice of Jubilee to the life and ministry of Jesus, that lead to a small, bold movement at the edges of the empire that dared to call Jesus, Lord. It’s a persistent message that still calls to us today: to bring good news to the poor, to set people free, and to lift the oppressed.

Since the 2023 World Conference, Carla, Wim, and I have sensed the Spirit nudging us toward a renewed focus: a deeper understanding and bold practice of generosity as a prophetic response to the growing mindset of scarcity in the world today.

The generosity of the early believers was real, bold, and visible. It reflected their deep trust in God’s creative abundance and their desire to offer their lives for the sake of the gospel. Their care for one another became

their witness, and Acts tell us that the Lord added to their numbers daily.

So how will we embrace God’s generosity and creative abundance to counteract the fear of scarcity, threatening to divide us as a global family?

As we give our World Mission Tithes today, we join in supporting the sacred work of this World Conference—a gathering where we discern, worship, fellowship, and choose a future of hope. You can give in the offering plate, online at CofChrist.org/give, or by using the QR codes on the screen that link to online giving options. God’s creative abundance flows freely through all creation. When we share faithfully and generously, God’s love and compassion continue to grow without end.

Janné Grover: Acts 2:46: “Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity.”

Temple ministry, table fellowship, nurturing body and spirit with joy and simplicity—what a wonderful blueprint for discipleship in sacred community! The Temple is more than a building or a destination; it is a *living instrument of revelation*, calling us to deeper reverence and connection with God. Through this instrument of revelation and the ministries flowing into the world like streams of living water, we are invited into transformative encounters with the Divine:

- Encounters that heal and reconcile as we sit together at sacramental tables and choose to live sacramentally, committed to the restoring of a broken and beautiful world longing to be made whole.
- Encounters that strengthen faith and knowledge as we allow ourselves to be formed by the Holy Spirit through our bold witness and courageous work of oneness in Christ.
- Encounters that propel us forward in Christ’s mission (adapted from Doctrine and Covenants 163:8a).

Joelle Wight, director of Temple Ministries: Earlier this year, I had the privilege of teaching a pre-baptismal lesson to a group of kids here at the Temple. The evening’s topic was Christ’s Mission, Our Mission. We talked about what Christ came to do: bring good news to the poor, release the captives, give sight to the blind, free the oppressed, and proclaim God’s favor.

We explored how we're invited into that mission—by seeing the world as it is, dreaming of how it could be, and taking action that moves us closer to God's preferred future.

As our evening neared its end, we walked together to the Mission Prayer hallway, where the prayer is displayed in many languages. We paused in that sacred space, surrounded by evidence of diversity and call, and remembered: Christ's mission takes all of us, in the world, participating in God's good purposes.

This, my friends, is what it means to be a people of the Temple—it isn't about gathering in a specific place, it's about living what this symbol represents in our daily lives. It means embodying hope, compassion, and justice in our own contexts, trusting that God's preferred future is possible when we are willing to respond.

In the next three years, the Temple will be at the heart of:

- The Community of Christ Peace Forum, amplifying our role as peacemakers.
- The International Youth Forum, forming a new generation of disciples. And...
- The 2028 World Conference, shaping our future together.

The Temple will also be a source for...

- Expanding hybrid and in-person ministries, and
- Providing multilingual resources that reflect our global diversity.

We are being called into *bold innovation and sacred risk*, trusting that God is still revealing new pathways forward. May we respond courageously and live as Temple people embodying Christ's peace wherever we may be.

Bunda Chibwe: Acts 2:47: "They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved."

We are called to be a living church. In Africa, at Zamtan, Jerusalem, Boma, Masina, and Abak congregations, we've witnessed that when worship becomes a lifestyle, faith is lived out loud, and community is rooted in love, the Holy Spirit moves powerfully. The early church praised God, lived

faithfully, and shared God's goodness openly. They did not chase numbers—they lived the gospel. And God added daily to their number in the same way these African congregations experience numerical and spiritual growth daily.

It is my strong testimony that our churches grow when our lives preach louder than our words—when kindness, joy, and justice are visible. Faith isn't private, it's public, embodied in how we welcome, serve, and love.

Stassi Cramm: Acts 2 paints a picture of a Spirit-filled community marked by awe, generosity, unity, and joyful fellowship. The early believers didn't just worship together, they shared their lives. They met daily, supported one another materially, and lived with open hands and open hearts. Their faith was visible, practical, and contagious.

This passage reminds us that *sharing Christ's peace* is more than speaking words—it's about creating communities where all can belong, where needs are met, and where God's goodness is demonstrated through our actions. It's the same peace that descended like fire at Pentecost. The same peace that strengthened Paul in prison. The same peace that has carried us through difficult decisions and transitions.

God invites us to open our hearts to Christ's peace—to trust that, even in the midst of change, we are being guided by the continued revelation of divine purpose.

Friends, we are pioneers in uncharted territory. We're living in a world that looks and feels different than it did even two years ago. And yes, that can feel unsettling. But who doesn't love a good adventure? This is not a time for fear, it's a time for faith. A time to take the next faithful step—together—even when the path is unclear.

The psalmist reminds us that, God's word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105, paraphrased). Not a spotlight on the whole journey—just a sacred light to guide our next faithful step. And that light has brought us to this place.

Look around. Community of Christ is a diverse people living and serving in many different countries, contexts, and cultures.

We could allow our differences to divide us. But we are first called to be citizens of a *new community*.

Paul referred to it as our citizenship in heaven, part of the body of Christ, and members of the household of God. We have also called it Zion, God's peaceable kingdom, the reign of God, communities of joy, hope, love, and peace—to name a few. We struggle to find words to capture the essence of what it means to be connected with others in the way God has always intended us to live.

That identity comes before nationality, culture, politics, or local tradition. It roots us in the peace of Christ. And it calls us to a deeper way of being. So what does it mean to be a citizen of this new community?

Doctrine and Covenants 163:8c gives us this vision: The entire church is to become *a sanctuary of Christ's peace*, a spiritual home for people of all nations, ethnicities, and life circumstances. This is our sacred calling—to break down walls of division and embody God's radical hospitality.

That vision is compelling because it reminds that as we contextualize Christ's mission, it is not about allowing the culture to shape who we are. Rather, it is about allowing who we are to signal a new way of being to the cultures where we live and serve.

Doctrine and Covenants 164:5 speaks to our citizenship reminding us that being baptized into Christ, makes us part of a new creation.

...Through the gospel of Christ, a *new community* of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God.

From our story as a Restoration movement, and from the broader story of faith—we know this path has never been easy. But faith and the stories we've heard tonight remind us: *Nothing is impossible* when we follow God who lights the way. Like Jesus we must pray, "May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, NSRVue).

We may not end up where we thought we were headed. We may have to let go of things we once held dear. And yes—perhaps most frightening of all—we may be called to grow in ways that change us completely. But that is the path of discipleship. That is the call of a prophetic people.

Let's be honest about where we are: We are *not yet* what God needs us to be. But we are moving in the right direction. We heard examples of how we are learning to live our Enduring Principles and growing in making them a way of life:

- A life of generosity, grace, peace, and sacred community.
- A life that embraces risk, vulnerability, and deep trust.

We are learning to go deeper in creating God's kingdom on Earth as it is in heaven as we live God's will. Everyone matters. Everyone is needed to write this next chapter of our collective story. So rather than worry, "What if we get it wrong?" let's dare to live in the hope of "What if we get it right?" Let's step out, trusting that God is already working among us.

From the continuous discernment of the leadership council, we offer these five steps to guide us—not as a map but as principles for pioneers of uncharted territory:

1. First, *discern* continuously what matters most.
2. Second, *focus* our resources on mission, leadership, and faithful stewardship by
 - a. Developing spiritually grounded, prophetically bold leaders, and
 - b. Responding with courage rooted in hope to global challenges such as the ones we are considering this week.
3. Third, *nurture local expressions* of a global movement through Spirit-led, organic networks.
4. Fourth, *expand the sacred ministries of the Temple* as a beacon of peace for all.
5. Fifth, hold ourselves *accountable* to faithfully reflect, evaluate, and respond as God leads.

This moment—our moment—is part of something far greater than ourselves. It's an invitation to move onward in faith: to honor the legacy of those who came before, to live as bearers of Christ's peace, to choose hope.

So let us lean into the vision of a sacred community—where *all* are welcome. Where every person—regardless of gender, orientation, background, or circumstance—is invited to choose hope as part of a new community. A world where, in the words of the hymn we will hear in a moment: "For everyone born, a place at the table."

Let that be the hope we choose.

