

“We Wanted to

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The main object of gathering is to provide a temple where Latter-day Saints can make covenants and receive ordinances.

We had to sell everything at a great sacrifice,” wrote Robert Crookston. “But we wanted to come to Zion and be taught by the prophet of God.”¹

Priscilla Staines wrote: “I left the home of my birth to gather to Nauvoo. I was alone. It was a dreary winter day on which I went to Liverpool. The company with which I was to sail were all strangers to me. When I . . . saw the ocean that would soon roll between me and all I loved, my heart almost failed me. But I had laid my idols all upon the altar. There was no turning back.”²

Of her belief and commitment to the principle of gathering, Jane C. Robinson Hindley wrote: “I . . . felt it my duty to go although it was a severe trial to me; . . . but my heart was fixed. I knew in whom I had trusted and with the fire of Israel’s God burning in my bosom, I forsook my home.”³

“What [is] the object of gathering?” the Prophet Joseph Smith queried a group of early Saints. Then he continued, “The main object [is] to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation.”⁴ Such an inspired explanation struck a chord in the hearts of thousands of Latter-day Saints who sacrificed greatly to gather from home and abroad. They responded to the call of the Prophet Joseph to gather to Kirtland, Ohio; then Missouri; and then Nauvoo, Illinois. In each place, they built or planned to build a temple.

Gathering to Kirtland

Early in 1831, the third conference of the Church was held in Fayette, New York. Here, early converts such as Newell Knight were instructed to gather to the Kirtland, Ohio, region. The Lord revealed, “There I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high” (D&C 38:32).

Brother Knight recalled: “We were instructed as a people, to begin the gathering of Israel. . . . Having returned home from conference, in obedience to the commandment which had been given, I, together with the Colesville Branch, began to make preparations to go to Ohio. . . . As might be expected, we were obliged to make great sacrifices of our property.”⁵

The Colesville Branch, led by Newell Knight, was one of three major groups from western New York that made significant sacrifices to gather to Kirtland. In addition to the 67 Colesville Saints, 50 Saints came with the Manchester Branch, led by Martin Harris, and 80 members of the Fayette Branch came under the leadership of Lucy Mack Smith and Thomas B. Marsh.⁶

Come to Zion”



When the Fayette Branch arrived at Buffalo, New York, in May of 1831, they saw the Colesville Saints, stranded in the frozen harbor at Fairport on Lake Erie. Lucy Mack Smith addressed her Fayette companions and made this bold declaration: “Now brethren and sisters, if you will all of you raise your desires to heaven, that the ice may be broken up, and

we be set at liberty, as sure as the Lord lives, it will be done.’ At that instant a noise was heard, like bursting thunder. The captain cried, ‘Every man to his post.’ The ice parted, leaving barely a passage for the boat, and so narrow that as the boat passed through the buckets of the waterwheel were torn off with a crash, which, joined to the word of command from



BUILDING THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE, BY WALTER RANE

The Saints gathered to Kirtland, Ohio, and labored to build a temple. On April 3, 1836, the Savior, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared there (see D&C 110).

the captain, the hoarse answering of the sailors, the noise of the ice, and the cries and confusion of the spectators, presented a scene truly terrible. We had barely passed through the avenue when the ice closed together again, and the Colesville brethren were left in Buffalo, unable to follow us.”⁷

Commencing in 1831 with these three groups, hundreds of Latter-day Saints began to pass through Fairport Harbor on their way to the Kirtland region. Also, missionaries traveled back from Kirtland through Fairport as they launched missionary work in various places in North America. Numerous missionaries renounced the comforts of home to travel without purse or scrip in order to gather converts from diverse pockets of the eastern United States and Canada.

Such proselytes converged at Kirtland, and many assisted in building the temple during the years 1833–36, although most were in a state of poverty.

Brigham Young was among them. He wrote: “When we arrived in Kirtland [in September 1833], . . . I had two children to take care of—that was all. I was a widower. ‘Brother Brigham, had you any shoes?’ No; not a shoe to my foot, except a pair of borrowed boots. I had no winter clothing, except a homemade coat that I had had three or four years . . . but Joseph said: ‘come up;’ and I went up the best I could.”⁸

Nevertheless, the Saints built a temple in Kirtland. When the Prophet Joseph offered the dedicatory prayer in 1836, he prayed to Almighty God, “Thou knowest that we have done this work through great tribulation; and out of

our poverty we have given of our substance to build a house to thy name” (D&C 109:5).

One week later, on April 3, 1836, the necessary priesthood keys were restored to the earth. Among them were “the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth” restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by the ancient prophet Moses (D&C 110:11).

In this gathering of Saints to Kirtland, we see the pattern of the gathering in the latter days: (1) a call to gather by a prophet; (2) a gathering; and (3) a striving to build a temple.

Gathering to Missouri

In the summer of 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith identified Jackson County, Missouri, as the hub of Zion and noted that “the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward” (D&C 57:3). The land of Zion was dedicated by Sidney Rigdon, the temple spot was dedicated by the Prophet Joseph, and the Saints desired to build a temple in Independence, but all were driven out of their homes by Jackson County mobocrats at the close of 1833.

Most of these exiled Saints temporarily settled in Clay County, Missouri, to the north. Elder Parley P. Pratt vividly described the cold winter scene, which presented itself at this time: “Hundreds of people were seen in every direction, some in tents and some in the open air around their fires, while the rain descended in torrents. Husbands were inquiring for their wives, wives for their husbands; parents for children, and children for parents. Some had the good fortune to escape with their families, household goods, and some provisions; while others knew not the fate of their friends, and had lost all their goods.”⁹

By 1836 the Saints in the region had migrated farther north to Caldwell County. Due to persecution in the Kirtland region, hundreds of Saints also fled to the city of Far West in Caldwell County. It became the center town for the Latter-day Saint refugees. Here they laid cornerstones for a temple, but the beleaguered Saints were driven beyond Missouri borders during the frigid winter of 1838–39 before they could build the temple.

Gathering to Nauvoo

The Prophet Joseph called the displaced Ohio and Missouri Saints to a new gathering place the following year—Nauvoo, Illinois. Here the pattern of gathering, strengthening, and temple building was repeated. The Saints built a beautiful city out of mosquito-infested swampland on the eastern banks of the Mississippi River.

Missionaries from Nauvoo traveled abroad to gather believers in Great Britain and other countries. Thousands were baptized, and between 1840 and 1845 about 5,000 Saints gathered to Nauvoo from overseas.

“It is impossible for pen to describe to you the difficulties you will have to endure,” William Clayton wrote from Nauvoo in 1840 to Edward Martin in England. “For my part I will say that if I was in England now and had experienced all the journey it would not in the least deter me from coming for I have often found that in the greatest seasons of suffering we have the greatest cause of rejoicing.”¹⁰

All joined in the building of a magnificent temple—the crowning act of their efforts. They had responded to the Lord’s call to “let all my saints

come from afar . . . and build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein” (D&C 124:25, 27).

Many men tithed their time through temple construction every 10th day. Women also willingly served by sewing clothing and preparing meals for the workers.¹¹ Wandle Mace recalled that following the Martyrdom, “Men were as thick as blackbirds busily engaged upon the various [temple] portions, all intent upon its completion.”¹² Some temple workers labored without adequate shoes or clothing.

Nevertheless, these pioneers willingly sacrificed to help complete the sacred building where thousands of Saints would receive their endowments. These sacred ordinances not only brought inner peace but also provided much-needed spiritual strength for the difficulties which lay immediately ahead.



Left: Early Latter-day Saints gathered to Missouri. Below: In May 1838, the Prophet designated Adam-ondi-Ahman as a gathering place. Two months later, cornerstones were laid for a temple in Far West.

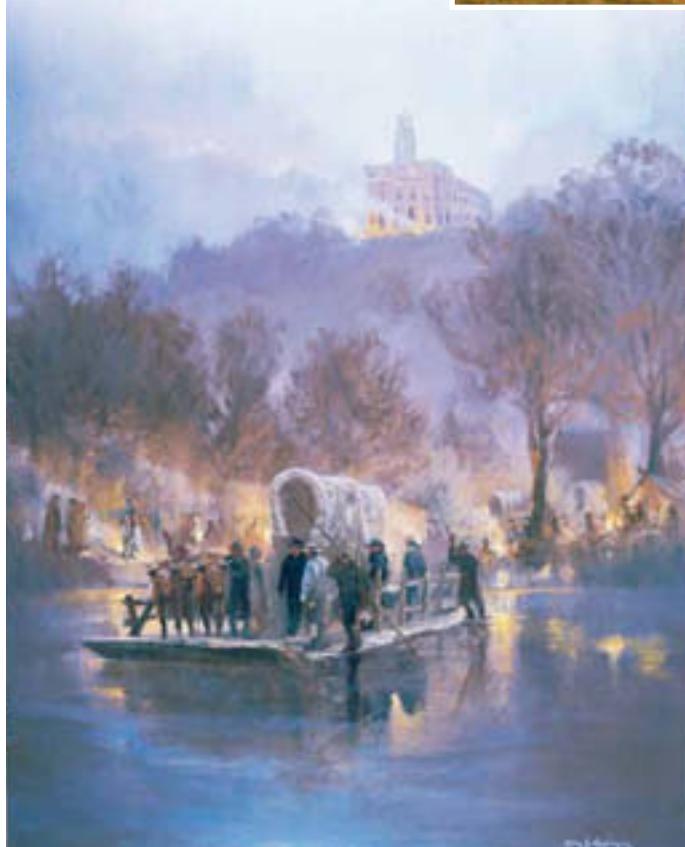


Gathering to the Salt Lake Valley

In the winter of 1846, the Saints were exiled once again, driven from their homes in Nauvoo to cross the Mississippi River. Sarah Pea Rich bore testimony of the strength the endowment provided the Saints as they began their trek west:

“For if it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple [Nauvoo] by the influence and help of the Spirit of the Lord, our journey would have been like one taking a leap in the dark.” She continued, “But we had faith in our Heavenly Father, and

Below: In the winter of 1845–46, thousands of Latter-day Saints received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple before they fled. Right: The Saints then gathered to Zion, the Salt Lake Valley, from the United States, Great Britain, and Scandinavia.



we put our trust in Him, feeling that we were His chosen people; . . . and instead of sorrow we felt to rejoice that the day of our deliverance had come.”¹³

Gathering Today

In this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Prophet Joseph Smith first issued the Lord’s invitation to His people to gather. Whether they gathered from various pockets in North America to build the Kirtland Temple or from across the Atlantic to receive the sacred endowment in Nauvoo, thousands of Saints sacrificed their all. These elect responded to the Lord’s invitation to be instructed and to be “endowed with power from on high.”

The Lord’s invitation is still open. Our prophets still call us to gather, but today we gather to the stakes in our homelands. As we strengthen the stakes of Zion, the Church builds

temples there. Then we, as Latter-day Saints, may also be endowed with that power from on high. And with our temple ordinances in place, we, too, may obtain the great promises of eternal life. ■

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NOTES

1. Autobiography of Robert Crookston, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5.
2. Quoted in Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (2001), 41.
3. Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, “Journals 1855–1905,” vol. 1, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 11, 14; spelling and capitalization modernized.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 307–8.
5. *Scraps of Biography: Tenth Book of the Faith-Promoting Series* (1883), 68.
6. See Milton V. Backman Jr., ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio* (1990), 19.
7. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (1958), 204–5.
8. *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1996), 23.
9. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 82.
10. Quoted in Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (2001), 22.
11. See *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Church Educational System manual, 1993), 242.
12. Autobiography of Wandle Mace, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 120.
13. Autobiography of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 42–43.

THE END OF PARLEY STREET, BY GLEN S. HOPKINSON; INSET: PIONEERS CROSSING THE RIVER, BY GREGORY SEEVERS