

THE ZION COMMUNITY

The Gathering to Zion

An Introduction to the Zion Community

for Those Who Have Been Waiting

*"Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."*

ISAIAH 60:1

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IN ZION

Foreword: Why This Document Exists

This document is written for one person — the person who has read the revelations given through Joseph Smith, who has believed the promises concerning Zion, and who has quietly wondered whether those promises would be fulfilled in their lifetime.

It is not written to persuade. Zion has never been built by persuasion, and the revelations are plain that the call to gather comes to each soul individually, by the voice of the Holy Ghost. What this document can do is tell the whole story honestly — the prophecies, the principles, the history, and the plain practical facts of how the Zion Community operates today — so that you can lay it before the Lord and judge for yourself whether this is the real thing you have been waiting for.

Read it carefully. Weigh it. Ask God. That is the only invitation this document makes.

Part One: The Place Appointed

In the summer of 1831, Joseph Smith traveled to the western frontier of Missouri, and there the word of the Lord settled the question of where Zion would stand:

"Hearken, O ye elders of my church, saith the Lord your God, who have assembled yourselves together, according to my commandments, in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints. Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion... Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse." (D&C 57:1–3)

The appointment was not general but exact — a county, a town, a lot. And when the Saints were driven from Jackson County two years later, the Lord did not revise the appointment. He reaffirmed it:

"There is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed, for the work of the gathering of my saints — until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion." (D&C 101:20–21)

Zion is Jackson County, Missouri, with her stakes in the regions round about. That is the teaching of Joseph Smith, and it was never altered by him.

Part Two: The Little Season and the Sure Promise

The Saints of 1833 were driven from their inheritances. The Saints of 1834 marched to redeem them and were turned back at Fishing River. To a people heartbroken by that failure, the Lord gave two revelations that govern everything the Zion Community understands about its own moment in history.

The first is the promise that the place stands:

"Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered. They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion." (D&C 101:17–18)

The second is the appointment of a waiting period — and the reason for it:

"Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion." (D&C 105:9)

The Lord was explicit about what the transgression was. It was not that the Saints had failed to fight well enough or gather fast enough. It was that they had not lived the law:

"But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; and Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself." (D&C 105:3–5)

Notice what this means. The redemption of Zion was never postponed to a different place. It was postponed to a different people — a people prepared, a people who had learned the law. The little season is not a season of relocation. It is a season of preparation, and it ends when there exists a people who actually live the celestial law upon the appointed land.

Joseph Smith taught this consistently to the end of his life. Zion waits in Missouri. The Saints will return. The only open question, for any generation, is whether they will be the people who are ready.

Part Three: The Celestial Law

What is the law of the celestial kingdom upon which Zion must be built? The revelations give it a name — consecration — and a pattern, and the pattern is older than the Church. It is the city of Enoch:

"And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them." (Moses 7:18)

One heart. One mind. Righteousness. And no poor among them. Every revelation on consecration is an unfolding of that single verse.

The Law given in February 1831 (D&C 42) established how it works among mortals. Each member consecrates to the Lord, and each member receives a stewardship — his own, held as his own, sufficient for himself and his family. Consecration under Joseph Smith was never common stock, never the abolition of private property, never the surrender of agency. When Joseph found a communal "family" arrangement operating on the Morley farm in Kirtland, the Law was given in part to replace it. What the celestial law asks for is the surplus — that which is more than sufficient — freely given for the poor, and for the building up of the Lord's kingdom:

"And they were to have equal claims on the properties... every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just — and all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church — every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God." (D&C 82:17–19)

And with the surplus of property goes something greater — the consecration of time and talent. In Zion, a person's covenant is not measured only in what flows into a storehouse, but in a life devoted to the Lord and the building up of His kingdom. That is the law. That is what the Saints of 1833 had not learned. That is what the little season exists to teach.

Part Four: What Zion Is For

Zion is not an experiment in economics or an exercise in community-building for its own sake. Its purpose is single and plain: **to prepare a people and a place for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and His millennial reign upon the earth.**

The revelations describe the New Jerusalem as a city of refuge and a city of peace — "and it shall be called Zion" — the gathering place of the righteous while judgments pass over the

world, a land of peace whose glory and terror are such that the wicked will not come unto it (D&C 45:66–71). It is the city the Lord comes to. Everything the Zion Community does — its labor, its industries, its education, its order of government — is measured against that one purpose. If a thing prepares the people for the Lord's coming, it belongs in Zion. If it does not, it does not.

Part Five: Who Gathers

The Lord defined the citizenry of Zion in a single phrase:

"Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion — THE PURE IN HEART." (D&C 97:21)

Zion gathers those who desire to live pure and holy lives — who are done with worldly ambition and want to spend the remainder of their days serving God. It gathers people who are willing to be known by one mark above all others, the mark the Savior gave His disciples:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
(John 13:35)

In Zion, all are brothers and sisters in the family of God on the earth. There are no strangers in the city of Enoch's pattern, no classes, no poor — because there is no one whose welfare is not the concern of everyone else.

And because Zion is holy ground, it is kept holy. No unclean practice or deed is permitted within her, and the government of Zion excludes unrighteous behavior — not as a matter of harshness, but as a matter of survival, for the revelations warn that if Zion does not observe to do whatsoever the Lord commands, He will "visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction" (D&C 97:26), but "if she observe to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will cause that she shall prosper, and spread herself and become very glorious" (D&C 97:25, 18). Zion's protection is her purity. She cannot afford to trade it.

Part Six: The Government of Zion — The Patriarchal Order

Here the Zion Community differs most visibly from every other body that honors Joseph Smith, and the difference should be stated plainly so that no one misunderstands it.

In Zion, the government rests upon the shoulders of the Patriarchs — the fathers of each family.

The Church of Jesus Christ in Zion — the church spoken of in D&C 115 — is composed of these Patriarchs and their families together. The Church as a body is presided over by a

Priesthood High Council. But the individual families are not presided over by the Church. Each family is presided over by its own father — its own Patriarch.

This is very different from the structure of the LDS church, where families sit under a hierarchy of local authorities — bishops, stake presidents — who preside over them and to whom questions of belief and standing are answerable. In Zion there is no such intermediary between a family and the Lord. Every Patriarch and every family are independently free in their own beliefs and their own judgments. This is why the members of the Zion Community call themselves Independent Christians.

We adhere to and accept the teachings of Joseph Smith as divine revelation, and it is from his teachings that this order comes. The revelations trace a priesthood that runs not through office but through family — the order "instituted in the days of Adam," which "was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed" (D&C 107:40–41). The Lord told the elders of the Church: "the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers... ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh" (D&C 86:8–10). Abraham sought the blessings of the fathers and "the right whereunto I should be ordained" — a right belonging to the fathers, descending from the beginning of time (Abraham 1:2–4). From these teachings the Zion Community understands that when the Lord brings again Zion, the burdens borne in the wilderness by church authorities return to where they rested in the beginning — upon the fathers.

It works because of a principle Joseph Smith taught relentlessly: **every soul is entitled to revelation for his own stewardship**. In Zion, every Patriarch is entitled to receive revelation for his own family. Every Patriarch is the prophet to his own house. The High Council presides over the affairs of the Church in common; the father presides at his own hearth; and no man stands between another man's family and God.

This is Zion's priesthood — the **Patriarchal Priesthood**. It is a priesthood that cannot be conferred and cannot be ordained by the laying on of another man's hands, because it is not another man's to give. It belongs to each person by right of lineage, as an heir. It is a priesthood that can only be revealed — made known to the one who holds it by the same Spirit that made it known to Abraham.

Part Seven: How the Zion Community Operates Today

What follows is a plain description of the practical order of the Community, so that anyone considering the covenant knows exactly what it involves. Nothing here is hidden, and nothing here should surprise a member after joining.

Consecration of time and talent. Upon joining the Order, members consecrate all of their time and talent unto the Lord and the building up of the kingdom of Zion. This is the heart of the covenant. Everything else described below is machinery in service of it.

Private property and private funds. Individuals and families in the Zion Community own their own private property. They keep their own private financial accounts and funds, for their personal effects and needs. Consecration in Zion, exactly as under Joseph Smith, does not abolish personal ownership.

Employment and taxes. Members hold jobs — some as employees of entities associated with the Order, some as employees of unrelated companies — for which they receive ordinary employment compensation. That income is theirs, and it is individually taxable under the laws of the land, which the Community observes fully. Members are regularly employed sufficiently to cover their ordinary living expenses.

Consecrated stewardships (volunteer service). Beyond employment, each member spends part of their time working as an unpaid volunteer — informally, in caring for the sick and serving neighbors; and formally, in service to 501(c)(3) organizations or to Zion Industries organized for the benefit of the community. This volunteer labor is called a member's consecrated stewardship. It is given freely, and the member should have no expectation of present or future compensation for it. Its recompense is the well-being and success of the whole Zion Community, in which every member shares.

Zion Industries and Cooperative Associations. The productive enterprises of the Community — often organized for the production of food, clothing, and other necessities — are largely established as Cooperative Associations under Missouri law, created for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Investment of surplus. Members are expected to invest their surplus — what remains beyond their ordinary living expenses — in creating resources and assets that benefit the entire community. A member may invest personal funds into a Zion Cooperative Association to promote the goodwill of the community, and does so at their own discretion. But every such investment is made with a clear understanding: the Association exists for the benefit of the community, not for the accumulation of individual wealth. If a member later chooses to withdraw, withdrawal is limited, requires approval, and the member's expectation should be limited to the return of their contributed capital or allocated equity. The specific terms of withdrawal and management are set out in written operating agreements created for each Association individually, and those written agreements — not this document — govern.

Housing. Most members of the Zion Order live in housing provided by the Order, for which they pay rent. Housing is a service of the community, not an investment vehicle; rent paid does not accrue equity.

Education. The Community encourages the continual education and development of every member. Time spent in continuing education is personal development time, for which no financial remuneration is paid or expected. In Zion, learning is not a phase of life; it is a way of life.

Leaving the Order. Membership is voluntary, and a member is free to leave. One who leaves departs with their private property, their personal funds and accounts, and — where applicable — recovery of equity from ownership interests in Cooperative Associations in which they invested, according to the operating agreement of each Association independently. Beyond that, a departing member should expect no additional compensation or income. Consecrated volunteer time is never repaid in money, whether one stays or goes. The Associations are not created to accumulate individual wealth that members carry away upon exit; they are created to provide benefits and services that remain for those who continue as members of the Order.

Part Eight: Counting the Cost

The Savior said that no man builds a tower without first sitting down and counting the cost (Luke 14:28). The Zion Community asks every prospective member to do exactly that, with eyes open. So let the cost be stated without softening:

If you join the Zion Order, you will consecrate your time and talent without financial return. You will work part of your life as an unpaid volunteer, permanently. Money you invest in the Cooperative Associations is committed to the community's benefit; you cannot freely withdraw it, and if you ever do withdraw, you should expect at most your contributed capital or allocated equity back — no growth, no profit, no reward for the years. If you live in Order housing, you will pay rent and build no equity in it. If you someday leave, you will leave with what is privately yours and whatever the Association agreements provide, and nothing else. No one who joins Zion to become wealthy will get what they came for.

Before you invest any funds in any Association, read its operating agreement in full. Ask every question you have, and expect a plain answer. Take whatever time you need, and take counsel — no covenant the Lord asks of anyone is ever harmed by careful, prayerful, unhurried consideration.

And weigh the other side of the ledger, which is the reason anyone comes at all: a life wholly devoted to God among a people of one heart; the end of the race for wealth that consumes

the world; your children raised among Saints; your labor building something that will still be standing, and still be blessing people, when you are gone; and a place among the people preparing for the return of the Lord. The revelations call the Saints who sought Zion in 1833 to lay down their lives for it if necessary. What is asked today is gentler — but it is still everything. That is what "consecrate all" has always meant.

The pure in heart have never found the price too high. But you must judge that for yourself, and you must judge it before the Lord, not before men.

Part Nine: The Invitation

For nearly two centuries, those who believed the revelations have asked the same question the Saints asked in 1834: How long, O Lord, until Zion is redeemed? The answer given then still stands — a little season, until there is a people prepared, living the celestial law, upon the land appointed.

The Zion Community bears this witness: the little season is ending. The land is the same land. The law is the same law. The gathering has begun.

Zion is come.

But no document can call you to Zion, and neither can any man. The call to Zion comes individually, by the Holy Ghost, to the pure in heart — and it comes to them one by one, exactly as it always has. If, in reading this, something in you has recognized what you have been waiting for, then take it to the Lord. Ask Him if this is His work. He has never yet refused to answer that question for an honest heart.

And if the answer comes — come and see.

"They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy, to build up the waste places of Zion." (D&C 101:18)
