

Welcome to the Church of Joy

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Karibuni kwenye Kanisa lenye Shangwe

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Wa Akidi ya Mitume Kumi na Wawili

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Because of the redeeming life and mission of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we can—and should—be the most joyful people on earth!

I was baptised into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Christmas Eve of 1987, nearly 37 years ago. That was a truly wonderful day in my life and in my eternal journey, and I'm profoundly grateful for the friends who prepared the way and brought me to the waters of that new birth.

Whether your baptism was yesterday or years ago, whether you meet in a large multiward Church building or under a thatched canopy, whether you receive the sacrament in remembrance of the Saviour in Thai or Swahili, I would like to say to you, welcome to the church of joy! Welcome to the church of joy!

The Church of Joy

Because of the loving plan of our Heavenly Father for each of His children, and because of the redeeming life and mission of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we can—and should—be the most joyful people on earth! Even as the storms of life in an often-troubled world pound upon us, we can cultivate a growing and abiding sense of joy and inner peace because of our hope in Christ and our understanding of our own place in the beautiful plan of happiness.

The Lord's senior Apostle, President Russell M. Nelson, has spoken of the joy that comes from

Kwa sababu ya maisha ya ukombozi na misheni ya Mwokozi, Yesu Kristo, tunaweza—na tunapaswa—kuwa watu wenye shangwe kubwa sana duniani!

Nilibatizwa katika Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho katika Mkeshwa wa Krismasi ya mwaka 1987, karibu miaka 37 iliyopita. Hiyo ilikuwa ni siku nzuri sana katika maisha yangu na katika safari yangu ya milele, na nina shukrani nyingi sana kwa ajili ya marafiki walioandaa njia na kuniongoza kwenye maji ya kuzaliwa upya huko.

Iwe ubatizo wako umefanyika jana au miaka kadhaa iliyopita, iwe mnakutana kwenye jengo kubwa la Kanisa lenye kata nyingi au kwenye nyumba ya nyasi, iwe mnapokea sakramenti katika kumkumbuka Mwokozi kwa Kithai au Kiswahili, ningependa niwaambie, karibuni kwenye kanisa lenye shangwe! Karibuni kwenye Kanisa lenye Shangwe!

Kanisa lenye Shangwe

Kwa sababu ya mpango wa upendo wa Baba yetu wa Mbinguni kwa kila mmoja wa watoto Wake, na kwa sababu ya maisha ya ukombozi na misheni ya Mwokozi, Yesu Kristo, tunaweza—na tunapaswa—kuwa watu wenye shangwe kubwa sana duniani! Hata kama tufani za maisha katika ulimwengu wenye matatizo zikija juu yetu, tunaweza kukuza hisia inayoongezeka na ya kudumu ya shangwe na amani ya ndani kwa sababu ya tumaini letu katika Kristo na uelewa wetu wa sehemu yetu katika mpango mzuri wa furaha.

Mtume mkuu wa Bwana, Rais Russell M. Nelson, ameongea kuhusu shangwe inayotokana

a life centered on Jesus Christ in nearly every address he has given since becoming the President of the Church. He summed it up so concisely: “Joy comes from and because of Him. ... For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is joy!”

We are members of the Church of Jesus Christ. We are members of the church of joy! And nowhere should our joy as a people be more apparent than when we gather together each Sabbath in our sacrament meetings to worship the source of all joy! Here we assemble with our ward and branch families to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, our deliverance from sin and death, and the Saviour’s powerful grace! Here we come to experience the joy, refuge, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and belonging found through Jesus Christ!

Is this spirit of collective rejoicing in Christ what you find? Is this what you bring? Maybe you think this doesn’t have much to do with you, or perhaps you are simply used to how things have always been done. But we can all contribute, no matter our age or our calling, to making our sacrament meetings the joy-filled, Christ-focused, welcoming hour they can be, alive with a spirit of joyful reverence.

Joyful Reverence

Joyfulreverence? “Is that a thing?” you may ask. Well, yes, it is! We deeply love, honour, and respect our God, and our reverence flows from a soul that rejoices in Christ’s abundant love, mercy, and salvation! This joyful reverence to the Lord should characterise our sacred sacrament meetings.

However, for many, reverence only means this: folding our arms tightly around our chests, bowing our heads, closing our eyes, and holding still—indefinitely! This might be a helpful way to teach energetic young children, but as we grow and learn, let us see that reverence is so much more than this. Is that how we would be if the Saviour were with us? No, for “in [His] presence is fulness of joy”!

Well, for many of us this transformation in sacrament services will take practice.

Attending versus Worshipping

na maisha yaliyojikita kwa Yesu Kristo takribani katika kila hotuba aliyotoa tangu awe Rais wa Kanisa. Anahitimisha kwa uzuri sana: “Shangwe huja kutoka Kwake na kwa sababu Yake. ... Kwa Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho, Yesu Kristo ni shangwe!”

Sisi ni waumini wa Kanisa la Yesu Kristo. Sisi ni waumini wa kanisa lenye shangwe! Na shangwe yetu inapaswa kuwa kubwa zaidi tunapokusanyika pamoja kila Sabato katika mikutano yetu ya sakramenti ili kumwabudu chanzo cha shangwe yote! Hapa tunakusanyika na familia za kata zetu na matawi ili kusherehekea sakramenti ya Chakula cha Mwisho cha Bwana, ukombozi wetu kutoka dhambini na kifo, na neema kuu ya Mwokozi! Tunakuja kupata shangwe, kimbilio, msamaha, kutoa shukrani na kuwa sehemu ya, vinavyopatikana kupitia Yesu Kristo!

Je, roho huyu wa pamoja wa shangwe katika Kristo ndiye kile mnachotafuta? Je, hiki ndicho mnachokileta? Labda unadhani hili halihusiani sana na wewe, au labda umezoea tu jinsi mambo yanavyofanywa siku zote. Lakini sote tunaweza kuchangia, bila kujali umri wetu au wito wetu, kuifanya mikutano yetu ya sakramenti iwe iliyojaa shangwe, yenye kufokasi kwa Kristo, yenye kukaribisha inavyowezekeana, iliyojaa roho wa shangwe ya unyenyekevu.

Shangwe ya Unyenyekevu

Shangweya Unyenyekevu? “Je, hicho ni kitu?” unaweza kuuliza. Sawa, ndiyo, ni kitu! Kwa kina tunampenda, kumcha na kumheshimu Mungu, na staha yetu hutiririka kutoka kwenye nafsi ambayo hushangilia katika upendo mwingi wa Kristo rehema na wokovu! Shangwe hii ya staha kwa Bwana inapaswa kutawala mikutano yetu mitakatifu ya sakramenti.

Hata hivyo, kwa wengi, staha humaanisha hili: kukunja mikono yetu kwa nguvu kuzunguka vifua vyetu, kuinamisha vichwa vyetu, kufumba macho na kutulia—kusiko na mwisho Hii inaweza kuwa njia nzuri ya kuwafundisha watoto wenye nguvu nyingi, lakini kadiri tunavyokua na kujifunza, hebu tuone kwamba staha ni zaidi ya hili. Je, hivyo ndivyo jinsi tungekuwa kama Mwokozi angekuwa pamoja nasi? Hapana, kwani “mbele za uso [Wake] ziko furaha tele.”

Ndiyo, kwa wengi wetu badiliko hili katika ibada za sakramenti zitahitaji mazoezi.

Kuhudhuria dhidi ya Kuabudu

We do not gather on the Sabbath simply to attend sacrament meeting and check it off the list. We come together to worship. There is a significant difference between the two. To attend means to be present at. But to worship is to intentionally praise and adore our God in a way that transforms us!

On the Stand and in the Congregation

If we are gathering in remembrance of the Saviour and the redemption He has made possible, our faces should reflect our joy and gratitude! Elder F. Enzio Busche once told the story of when he was a branch president and a young boy in the congregation looked at him on the stand and asked loudly, “What is the man with that mean face doing up there?” Those who sit on the stand—speakers, leaders, choirs—and those who gather in the congregation communicate to each other this “welcome to the church of joy” through the expressions they wear on their faces!

Hymn Singing

As we sing, are we joining together to praise our God and King no matter the quality of our voices, or are we just mumbling or not singing at all? Scripture records that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto [God]” in which His soul delights. So let’s sing! And praise Him!

Talks and Testimonies

We center our talks and testimonies on Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and the fruits of humbly living Their gospel, fruits that are “sweet above all that is sweet.” Then we truly “feast ... even until [we] are filled, that [we] hunger not, neither ... thirst,” and our burdens become lighter through the joy of the Son.

The Sacrament

The glorious focal point of our services is the blessing and receiving of the sacrament itself, the bread and the water representing the atoning gift of our Lord and the whole purpose of our gathering. This is “a sacred time of spiritual renewal” when we witness anew that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and

Hatukusanyiki kwenye Sabato ili tu kuhudhuria mkutano wa sakramenti na kuweka alama ya vema kwenye orodha ya mambo ya kufanya. Tunakuja pamoja ili kuabudu. Kuna tofauti yenye umuhimu kati ya haya mawili. Kuhudhuriaina-amaanisha kuwepo pale. Lakini kuabuduni kwa makusudi kabisa kusifu na kumsujudia Mungu wetu katika njia ambayo hutubadilisha!

Kwenye Jukwaa na katika Mkusanyiko

Kama tunakusanyika kumkumbuka Mwokozi na kwa ukombozi alioufanya uwezekane, nyuso zetu zinapaswa ziakisi shangwe yetu na shukrani! Mzee F. Enzio Busche aliwahi kusiimulia hadithi ya wakati alipokuwa rais wa tawi na kijana mdogo kwenye mkusanyiko alimwangukia kwenye jukwaa na kuuliza kwa sauti, “Mwanaume huyo mwenye uso katili anafanya nini hapo?” Wale wanaokaa kwenye jukwaa—wazungumzaji, viongozi, kwaya—na wale wanaokusanyika kwenye umati wanawasiliana hivi “karibu kwenye kanisa la shangwe” kupitia mwonekano wanaokuwa nao kwenye nyuso zao!

Kuimba Nyimbo za Dini

Tunapoimba, je, tunaungana pamoja kumsifu Mungu na Mfalme wetu, bila kujali kiwango cha sauti zetu, au tunamung’unya tu au hatuimba kabisa? Maandiko yanasema kwamba wimbo wa mwenye haki ni sala kwa [Mungu] ambamo nafsi Yake hufurahia. Kwa hiyo, acha tuimbe! Na kumsifu Yeye!

Hotuba na Shuhuda

Tunakita hotuba na shuhuda zetu kwa Baba wa Mbinguni na Yesu Kristo na matunda ya kuishi kwa unyenyekevu injili Yao, matunda ambayo ni “matamu kupita yote yaliyo matamu.” Kisha kwa hakika “tutakula ... mpaka hata [sisi] tushibe, kwamba [sisi] hatutapata njaa, wala ... kiu,” na mizigo yetu itakuwa miepesi sana, kupitia kwa shangwe inayotokana na Mwana.

Sakramenti

Lengo tukufu la ibada zetu ni baraka na kupokea sakramenti yenyewe, mkate na maji vinavyowakilisha zawadi ya Bwana wetu ya kulipia dhambi na lengo zima la kukusanyika kwetu. Huu ni “muda mtakatifu wa kufanywa upya kiroho”, tunaposhuhudia upya kwamba tuko radhi kujichukulia juu yetu jina la Yesu

make again the covenant to always remember the Saviour and keep His commandments.

In some seasons of life, we may approach the sacrament with heavy hearts and overwhelming loads. At other times, we come free and unburdened from cares and troubles. As we listen intently to the blessing of the bread and water and partake of those sacred tokens, we may feel to reflect on the sacrifice of the Saviour, His agonies in Gethsemane, His anguish on the cross, and the sorrows and pains He endured on our behalf. That will be what relieves our souls as we connect our suffering to His. At other times, we will feel to wonder with grateful awe at the “exquisite and sweet” joy of what Jesus’s magnificent gift has made possible in our lives and in our eternities! We will rejoice for what is yet to come—our cherished reunion with our beloved Father and risen Saviour.

We may have been conditioned to suppose that the purpose of the sacrament is to sit in the pew thinking only about all the ways we messed up during the week before. But let’s turn that practice on its head. In the stillness, we can ponder the many ways we have seen the Lord relentlessly pursue us with His wonderful love that week! We can reflect on what it means to “discover the joy of daily repentance.” We can give thanks for the times the Saviour entered into our struggles and our triumphs and the occasions when we felt His grace, forgiveness, and power giving us strength to overcome our hardships and bear our burdens with patience and even good cheer.

Yes, we ponder the sufferings and injustices inflicted upon our Redeemer for our sin, and that does cause sober reflection. But we sometimes get stuck there—in the garden, at the cross, inside the tomb. We fail to move upward to the joy of the tomb bursting open, the defeat of death, and Christ’s victory over all that might prevent us from gaining peace and returning to our heavenly home. Whether we shed tears of sorrow or tears of gratitude during the sacrament, let it be in awesome wonder at the good news of the Father’s gift of His Son!

Kristo na kufanya tena agano la daima kumkumbuka Mwokozi na kushika amri Zake.

Katika baadhi ya misimu ya maisha, tunaweza kuhudhuria sakramenti kwa mioyo iliyo mizito na mizigo inayotulemea. Wakati mwingine, tunakuja tukiwa huru na pasi-po mzungu wa mambo ya kujali na matatizo. Tunaposikiliza kwa dhati kubarikiwa kwa mkate na majina kushiriki ishara hizo takatifu, tunaweza kuhisi kutafakari juu ya dhabihu ya Mwokozi, masumbuko Yake huko Gethsemane, maumivu yake makali msalabani na huzuni na machungu aliyovumilia kwa niaba yetu. Hicho ndicho kitakuwa kitu kinachopoza nafsi zetu tunapounganisha maumivu yetu kwa Yake. Nyakati zingine, tutatamani kujiuliza kwa mshangao wenye shukrani ya heshima kuhusu huu uzuri na utamu wa zawadi tukufu ya Yesu ambayo imefanya iwezekane katika maisha yetu na milele yetu! Tutashangilia kwa ajili ya kile ambacho bado hakijafika—muunganiko wetu tunaouhifadhi kwa upendo mkubwa na Baba yetu mpendwa na Mwokozi mfufuka.

Yaweza kuwa tumezoeshwa kufikiri kwamba lengo la sakramenti ni kukaa kwenye viti na kufikiria tu kuhusu njia zote tulizokosea wakati wa wiki hii. Lakini acha tubadili mtindo huo. Kwa utulivu, tunaweza kutafakari njia nyingi tulizomwona Bwana pasipo kuchoka akitupigania kwa upendo Wake wa ajabu katika wiki hiyo! Tunaweza kutafakari katika kile inachomaanisha “kutambuashangweya toba ya kila siku.” Tunaweza kutoa shukrani kwa nyakati ambazo Mwokozi aliingilia mapambano na ushindi wetu na matukio ambayo tulihisi neema Yake, msamaha na uweza uliotupa nguvu ya kushinda magumu yetu na kubeba mizigo yetu kwa ustahimilivu na hata kwa furaha.

Ndio, tunatafakari mateso na udhalimu aliotendewa Mkombozi wetu kwa ajili ya dhambi zetu, na hilo husababisha tafakuri ya makini. Lakini wakati mwingine tunakwama hapo—kwenye bustani, msalabani, ndani ya kaburi. Tunashindwa kusonga kwenye shangwe ya kaburi kufunguka wazi, kushindwa kwa mauti na ushindi wa Kristo dhidi ya yote yanayoweza kutuzuia tusipate amani na kurejea kwenye makazi yetu ya mbinguni. Iwe tunatiririkwa na machozi ya huzuni au machozi ya furaha wakati wa sakramenti, acha iwe kwa heshima ya ajabu kwenye habari njema ya zawadi ya Baba ya Mwanawe!

Parents with Children Who Are Young or Have Special Needs

Now, for parents of children who are young or have special needs, there is often no such thing as a time of stillness and quiet reflection during the sacrament. But in small moments throughout the week, you can teach by example the love, gratitude, and joy you feel for and from the Saviour as you constantly care for His little lambs. No effort in this pursuit is wasted. God is so aware of you.

Family, Ward, and Branch Councils

Likewise at home, we can begin to enhance our hopes and expectations for our time at church. In family councils, we can discuss how each individual can contribute in meaningful ways to welcoming all to the church of joy! We can plan and expect to have a joyful experience at church.

Ward and branch councils can envision and create a culture of joyful reverence for our sacrament hour, identifying practical steps and visual cues to help.

Joy

Joy looks different for different people. For some, it may be exuberant greetings at the door. For others, it might be quietly helping people feel comfortable by smiling and sitting next to them with a kind and open heart. For those who feel left out or on the margins, the warmth of this welcome will be crucial. Ultimately, we can ask ourselves how the Saviour would want our sacrament hour to be. How would He want each one of His children to be welcomed, cared for, nourished, and loved? How would He want us to feel when we come to be renewed through remembering and worshipping Him?

Conclusion

At the start of my journey of faith, joy in Jesus Christ was my first great discovery, and it changed my world. If you have yet to discover this joy, embark on its quest. This is an invitation to receive the Saviour's gift of peace, light, and joy—to revel in it, to wonder at it, and to rejoice

Wazazi wenye Watoto Wadogo au Wenye Mahitaji Maalumu

Sasa, kwa wazazi wa watoto wadogo au wenye mahitaji maalumu, mara nyingi hakuna kitu kama muda wa utulivu na kutafakari kwa ukimya wakati wa sakramenti. Lakini katika nyakati fupi za wiki, unaweza kufundisha kwa mfano upendo, shukrani na shangwe unayohisi kwa ajili ya Mwokozi na itokayo Kwake kadiri kwa uendelevu unavyowatunza kondoo Wake wadogo. Hakuna juhudi yoyote inayopotea kwenye jukumu hili. Mungu anakujua sana.

Mabaraza ya Familia, Kata, na Tawi

Vivyo hivyo na nyumbani, tunaweza kuanza kuboresha matumaini na matarajio yetu kwa ajili ya muda wetu wa kanisani. Katika mabaraza ya familia, tunaweza kujadili jinsi kila mtu anavyoweza kuchangia katika njia bora za kuwakaribisha wote kwenye kanisa la shangwe! Tunaweza kupanga na kutarajia kuwa na uzoefu wenye shangwe kanisani.

Mabaraza ya kata na matawi yanaweza kutazamia na kutengeneza utamaduni wa shangwe yenye staha kwa ajili ya saa yetu ya sakramenti, yakibainisha hatua zinazotekelezeka na ishara zinazoonekana ili kusaidia.

Shangwe

Shangwe huonekana tofauti kwa watu tofauti. Kwa baadhi inaweza kuwa salamu za msisimko mlangoni. Kwa wengine, inaweza kuwa kuwasaidia watu kwa ukimya kuhisi vizuri kwa kutabasamu na kukaa karibu nao kwa moyo mwema na mkunjufu. Kwa wale wanaohisi kutengwa au kuwa pembeni, ukunjufu wa karibisho hili utakuwa muhimu. Hatimaye, tunaweza kujiuliza ni vipi Mwokozi angependelea saa yetu ya sakramenti iwe. Ni kwa jinsi gani angependelea kila mmoja wa watoto Wake wakaribishwe, kutunzwa, kulishwa na kupendwa? Je, Yeye angependa tuhisi nini pale tunapokuja kufanywa upya kupitia kumkumbuka na kumwabudu Yeye?

Hitimisho

Mwanzoni mwa safari yangu ya imani, shangwe katika Yesu Kristo ilikuwa ni uvumbuzi wangu wa kwanza mkubwa, na ilibadilisha ulimwengu wangu. Kama bado hujatambua shangwe hii, anza kuitafuta. Huu ni mwaliko wa kupokea zawadi ya Mwokozi ya amani, nuru na shan-

in it every Sabbath.

Ammon in the Book of Mormon expresses the feelings of my heart when he says:

“Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were [a people] that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name.

“Now if this is boasting, even so will I boast; for this is my life and my light, ... my joy, and my great thanksgiving.”

Welcome to the church of joy! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

gwe—kuifurahia, kuishangaa na kuishangilia, kila Sabato.

Amoni katika Kitabu cha Mormoni alitoa hisia za moyo wangu aliposema:

“Sasa si tunayo sababu ya kufurahi? Ndiyo, nasema kwenu, hakujakuwa na [watu] ambao walikuwa na sababu kubwa hivyo ya kufurahi kama sisi, tangu mwanzo wa dunia; ndiyo, na shangwe yangu imenichukua mbali, hata kwa majivuno kwa Mungu wangu; kwani ana uwezo wote, hekima yote, na akili yote; anaelewa vitu vyote, na ni Kiumbe cha huruma, hata kwenye wokovu, kwa wale ambao watatubu na kuamini kwa jina lake.

“Sasa kama hii ni kujivuna, na hata iwe hivyo nitajivuna; kwani haya ni maisha yangu na mwangaza wangu, ... shangwe yangu na shukrani yangu nyingi.”

Karibuni kwenye kanisa lenye shangwe! Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.