

Detroit Branch #2 Visits Cincy-Mo

By Sister Mallory Batson

The members of the Cincinnati-Morrow branch were excited as we waited for the arrival of the Detroit Branch #2 bus at Fort Ancient. There we saw the ruins of an ancient Native American settlement and learned about what we believe used to be a Lamenite village.

That night, we gathered at the Cincinnati-Morrow church building, anticipating a blessing. We started the evening with singing. Brother Chuck Maddox welcomed everyone and expressed our branch's excitement and appreciation to have Branch #2 with us for the weekend. After Brother Dan Parravano opened in prayer, Brother Doug Obradovich opened the meeting by relating a story about a man who was trying to sell a couch. He put a sign on the couch that said "free" and it sat for weeks without anyone wanting to take it. Then he changed to sign and put one up saying, "\$50," and it sold the next day. Brother Doug said salvation isn't free. Christ paid for it for each and every one of us. He wanted us to realize how much God really loves us and to understand our redemption. Once we grasp it, it no longer becomes about us; it's about them. It's about spreading the word of God, His love, and His gospel to those who don't know about it yet. Once we grasp that, we can love fully. He also talked about making justifications for our sins and how "we're right, but we're wrong." We are the people who need to live a better life. We are the people Christ left this earth to. We have to tell others; that's the love of Christ. He left us with this thought, "All who were baptized chose to come out of the water. The question is: what are you doing now?"

Brother Jim Lambert transitioned into communion, telling us to focus on the sacrifice God made for us. After we shared communion, the young people sang a selection.

Brother James Gross, newly baptized, shared his testimony of how he came to the decision to serve the Lord. He said he felt the love of God from all of the brothers and sisters and he now has a desire to give that to others.

Brother Chuck Maddox followed and exhorted the congregation to take ownership in the fact that there are souls that we need to tell of Christ.

After we closed the meeting, we shared a wonderful time together around a campfire with food and fellowship

We gathered at the branch Sunday morning anticipating a spirit-filled day. Apostle Leonard Lovalvo opened our service, talking on the three sons of Mosiah. He spoke of how they rebelled against the Church, and then once they were converted, had a desire to share the gospel with everyone (Mosiah 28, Alma 29:9). Brother Leonard compared being an instrument in God's hands to being in an orchestra. Just as each instrument has its own part in the orchestra, each of us has our own part in God's plan. If one note is off, the director knows, making it important for all of us to be in tune. It is imperative for each of us to feel the responsibility of fulfilling God's work. Brother Leonard urged all of us to be quick to give our testimonies and offer prayers for those who don't know of the Lord.

Brother Duane Lovalvo followed by talking about the day he was baptized and how he has the desire to be an instrument in God's hands. He told the congregation, "If you want to be an instrument, look to God. The way is so simple. Get baptized."

Brother Mike Pandone spoke on Alma and how, after he was converted, he was completely convicted and went back to right all of his wrongs (Alma 36: 27-28). Brother Mike quoted a hymn, saying, "The blood that gives me strength from day to day, it will never lose its

power.” It hasn’t changed today (Alma 37:5-6). He encouraged us to tell others of Christ and what we have, saying, “If no one remembers my name, I don’t care. One converted soul is worth it all.”

Brother Chuck said as parents, you want your sons and daughters to be empowered; Christ wants the same thing for us as our Heavenly Father. He asked the congregation how long it had been since our instruments had been tuned. He continued, saying it is time to take our instruments and move forward. Every time we justify our actions, we get a little more out of tune. God is ready to tune us to be the instruments He wants us to be.

Brother David Lovalvo transitioned into testimony, saying as ministers, when they receive a message, they can’t wait to get up and share it. He expressed how he hopes that all of us feel the same way, because it is also our responsibility to preach the Gospel.

In our testimony service we heard wonderful words such as, “I’m so thankful that I belong to such a loving family,” “I’m excited. I’m empowered. I’m a member of The Church of Jesus Christ,” and “My testimony is this: I’m glad to be apart of God’s church.” Every word spoken was beautiful.

As we were closing our meeting, Brother Doug Obradovich got up and told us two weeks prior to our meeting he was given the message that was spoken today, and once again exhorted us to play our instruments.

The Cincinnati-Morrow branch was so thankful to have Branch #2 with us for the weekend. It was filled with fun, fellowship and the Spirit of God.