

Josh Mangelson 0:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Robin Linkhart 0:33

Hello and welcome to Project Zion podcast. This episode features Executive Director of Community of Christ Historic Sites, Barbara Walden, apostle Lachlan Mackay and Kirtland Temple intern Megan Reed, as they present a class on how Community of Christ views church history through the lens of the Church History Principles. This class is followed by a lively Q&A with participants originally provided online on August 2 2020, through Salt Lake City Community of Christ online ministries. This class was part of our traditional sunstone Sunday Invitational immediately following the 2020 Sunstone Symposium, which was also provided online due to the global pandemic of 2020. We now join our guests, Barbara Walden, Lach Mackay and Megan Reed.

Barbara Walden 2:17

Well, thank you, Carla, and Welcome friends. It's so good to be here. As Carla mentioned, my name is Barb Walden, and I serve as the executive director for the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, and I'm also one of three who served as the official church historian for Community of Christ. So it's an absolute joy to be with you this morning. And now that you're all here, let me explain what you're in for for this morning's class. We're going to begin sharing our own stories. So I'll have an opportunity to share with you what my journey has been like in church history and how it began. And then I'll turn the mic over to apostle Lachlan Mackay, who will share a little bit about his journey. Through church history, and when Lachlan is finished, Megan Reed, well share a little bit about her journey. After you've heard our journeys, we will walk through the church history principles, and talk about how they're helpful as you're reading and interpreting the past. As we finish those church history principles and how they are helpful in exploring Community of Christ history and Latter Day Saints history. We will then open up the floor to all of you in the audience, and then open q&a. Feel free to ask any question about the Church History Principles about Community of Christ history, about our experiences working and researching Community of Christ history. I don't think there are any limits to those questions. Once the Q&A is over and Carla will bring it to a close with her closing remarks that will complete 50 minutes of church history fun. So again, thank you all for joining us. I hope you're as excited as we are. So as we talk about the Church History Principles, I think it's helpful for you to get a little bit of an idea of a background between Lachlan and I and Megan, and what our experience has been like. For me, I grew up in Southern California, in a small conservative congregation in the Community of Christ. And when it came to church history, we were learning a traditional church history, very faithful Church history, where we look to the people of the past as models, model disciples of what we wish to be. When we look to Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith, was the mouthpiece of, a mouthpiece of God and His actions

were in direct connection to how God was leading him to lead our faith movement. So between the summer of my freshman and sophomore year, I left college in order to experience a summer internship at the Joseph Smith historic site in Nauvoo, Illinois. And it was while I was in Nauvoo that summer, the first two weeks with my summer Professor Alma Blair, who is also a history professor at Graceland college now Graceland University. That first two weeks almost spent those weeks teaching us a church history that was very different from what I learned in Sunday school. My fellow interns and I were learning about a history that was based in historical evidence in 1840s journal accounts and newspaper accounts in these primary sources that directly conflicted with the way that my grandmother shared the story of the church with me. And that experience was much more than learning church history. It was about dismantling the heritage that I had learned, and it was painful. If there's anything that I've learned over the last 25 years, it's like church history is hard. And as an 18 year old summer intern I was learning that head on in Nauvoo, which I had known is the city of Joseph. And while I spent that Summer in the City of Joseph, I discovered that the Joseph Smith that I learned about in my childhood, who was up on that pedestal, he was not only falling from that pedestal, he was falling hard. And it was learning about Nauvoo, polygamy, learning about the Council of 50, learning about Joseph's run for the presidency, learning about the Nauvoo militia and what I thought was a peace church, learning about property ownership. It was learning about all the flaws and cracks in our church history. And I couldn't help but feel that I had been lied to through much of my childhood, and that the history that I have learned, was quickly becoming not the honest history, not the faith promoting history, and that dismantling that history was very painful as an 18 year old. But our professor at the time, acknowledged that I was struggling and my fellow interns were struggling. And he would take time with us to listen to those struggles. And he helped me see that Nauvoo was not the city of Joseph, that as Joseph was coming down from that pedestal, that I needed to look to the people that surrounded him, look to the community that was building up that historic Nauvoo community, because it was with those people that had is where the church is. And that was really eye opening. It was learning about the women's Relief Society and what they were doing to help orphans of the community and to help the homeless and the community. It was learning the immigrants stories. It was learning about William Marks and Emma Smith, and it was through those people that I found a heritage and in many ways, as Joseph was falling to the ground, it was people like Emma Smith that was being that were rising up. In my mind, and it's even years later, decades later as I go into church history, it's the stories of the people that I find great interest in, that I find inspiring. I think Joseph Smith is still that Prophet puzzle in my mind. There's just more pieces to him now than there was when I was 18 years old. But it's recognizing that church history can be hard. And I certainly experienced that on the banks of the Mississippi River in the summer of 19...1996? Many, many years ago. So that's a little bit about my experience. It was the struggle, but then also learning that church history is not all about Joseph, that there are so many more involved in that historic community. Lach, your turn.

Lach Mackay 8:50

So I had a very different experience. I was raised in Jackson County, Missouri. Raised going to Smith family reunions and Nauvoo. My mom grew up in a home that Frederick Madison Smith, who was a prophet president of the organization lived in he lived with his daughter and her

family. But I never learned the story that the way that Barb learned I learned the story, but there was no pedestal involved. And I went away to school and studied Russian studies and economics at University of Missouri. I thought I was going to work for the government. It's a really long interview process so needed to kill time I signed up for a museum management internship through Graceland. Same program that Barb later ended up in. And I thought, you know, before I go to Nauvoo for the summer I had to learn something about this place. Learn more about this place. I picked up Robert Bruce Flander's "Nauvoo Kingdom on the Mississippi", which along with Fawn Brody's bio of Joseph was one of the early expressions Mormon history. And as I started reading, I was just captured by the story. But because I had never learned a version where Joseph was significantly elevated, it didn't have the trauma that Barb experienced. I didn't have to, to dismantle. I didn't have to demythologize before trying to put the story back together again. So just a very different experience than Barb. How about you, Megan?

Megan Read 10:36

So, yes, my my experience is definitely a little different. I did not grow up in a religious household. My mom kind of allowed for us to find our own path and, you know, through friends and through going to two different churches, I was able to find Community of Christ and I actually joined Community of Christ because of the community that I experienced today. So to lead me to where I'm at today, I'm actually at Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and I am studying religion. And I'm currently also an intern for the Kirtland temple. And it's been an exciting experience. And I've been able to actually learn about the history and and all that entails. I haven't had to do any dismantling. But it's interesting seeing how history has been portrayed and how it is, has affected people's lives. And it's just an exciting journey to go through, and exciting to learn. So I'm excited to continue that journey as well.

Lach Mackay 11:52

Thank you, Megan. Megan is here with us this morning in her role as a Kirtland temple intern and she's providing our tech support and Just as amazing at it. So thrilled to have her with us. I'm going to go to a screen share. And we're going to explore briefly Community of Christ Church history principles. President Steven Veazey Prophet President of Community, Christ, develop these in 2008. And they have been really helpful for us as we have worked to, to better understand and better process our story. So let's look at the first one. "Continuing exploration of our history informs our identity. We seek always to clarify our identity, message and mission and our story we see clearly God's Spirit giving the church tools, insights and experiences for God's purposes, that people with a shared memory of their past and an informed understanding of its meaning are better prepared to chart their way into the future."

Robin Linkhart 13:04

Number two, "History informs but does not dictate our faith and beliefs. foundation and continuing source for our faith is God's revelation in Jesus Christ. studying history is not about proving or disproving mystical, spiritual or revelatory experiences that birth or transform religious movements. Sound history informs faith and help healthy faith leads to insights about history, doctrine and faith, guided by the Holy Spirit must play an important role in discovering

the lasting meaning of such events, as well as the deeper truths found in them. Our understanding of our history affects our faith and beliefs. However, our past does not limit our faith and beliefs to what they were historically."

Lach Mackay 13:54

"The church encourages honest, responsible, historical scholarship. Studying history involves related fields. Historians use academic research to get as many facts as they can. Then they interpret those facts to construct as clear a picture as possible of what was going on in the past. This includes analyzing human culture to see how it affected events. By that we mean context is critical. Historians try to understand patterns of meaning to interpret what the past means for our future. This process should avoid presentism or interpreting the past based on a current worldview and culture instead of the culture at the time." This one is really hard this avoiding presentism really difficult today."

Robin Linkhart 14:43

"Number four, the study of church history is a continuing journey. If we say that a book on history is the only true telling of the story, we risk canonizing one version, a tendency we have shown in the past. This blocks further insight from continuing research. Good historical inquiry understands that conclusions are open to correction, as new understanding and information comes from ongoing study."

Lach Mackay 15:13

Number five, "Seeing both the faithfulness and human flaws in our history make it more believable and realistic, not less. Our history has stories of great faith and courage that inspire us. Our history also includes human leaders who said and did things that can be shocking to us. From our current perspective and cultural. Historians try not to judge instead, they try to understand by learning as much as possible about the context and the meaning of those words and actions at the time. The result is empathy instead of judgment. Our scriptures are consistent, and pointing out that God uses in perfect people."

Robin Linkhart 15:54

"Responsible study of church history involves learning repentance and transformation. A church focused on promoting communities of reconciliation, justice and peace should be self critical and honest about its history. It is important for us to confess when we have been less than what the gospel calls us to be dishonest, it prompts us to repent, and it strengthens our integrity. Admitting past mistakes helps us avoid repeating them and frees us from the influences of past injustices and violence in our history. We must be humble and willing to repent, individually and as a community to contribute as fully as possible to restoring God's peace honor."

Lach Mackay 16:41

"The church has a long standing tradition that it does not legislate or mandate positions on matters of church history. Historians should be free to draw their own conclusions after thorough consideration of the evidence. through careful study and the Holy Spirit's guidance,

the church is learning how to accept and responsibly interpret all of its history. This includes putting new information and changing understandings into proper perspective. While emphasizing the parts of our history that continue to play a role in guiding the church's identity and mission today."

Robin Linkhart 17:15

"We need to create a respectful culture of dialogue about matters of history, we should not limit our story to one perspective. diverse viewpoints bring richness to our understanding of God at work and our sacred story. Of course, historians will come to different conclusions as they study. Therefore, it is important for us to create and maintain a respectful culture that allows different points of view on history. Our conversation about history should be polite and focused on trying to understand others views. Most important we should remain focused on what matters most for the mission of the church in this time."

Lach Mackay 17:55

Finally, number nine, "Our faith is grounded in God's revelation and Jesus Christ. The continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit, we must keep our hearts and minds centered on God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It's God's word alive in human history, Jesus Christ was and is the foundation of our faith, the focus of the church's mission and message." So, now our hope is to share with you what this looks like in practice, as we just go to an open Q&A. And we're going to ask you to use the Zoom Q&A feature to submit those questions, please. So if possible, use the q&a feature versus the chat feature. A little different in a webinar session that we're in now versus the regular zoom meeting. Just maybe to help prompt some questions or give you some idea of what I feel qualified to talk about. But feel free to ask things that I'm not qualified to talk about but I spent about 15 years at Kirtland Temple. Barb was there for many years as well. So we have a pretty good background in Kirtland history, history of the evolution of endowment during the Kirtland years and into Nauvoo. I've been in Nauvoo now for maybe 12 years. My focus here really is more Smith Family properties. Pretty good background in the Smith family itself. The family cemetery, is one of the principal researchers on the Scannel Daguerreotype, what might be the first photo of Joseph Smith that worked on that with Ron Roaming for years. Really interested in visual images in the early church, not artistic and I'm not great at visualization. But I'm very interested in the arts community in the early church. Barb, what do you like to focus on?

Robin Linkhart 19:59

For me, I'm a big fan of the artifacts and the archives. I love the stuff. I was really captured by the Kirtland Temple, my second summer at the historic sites, and to be there in that historic structure where people from all over the world would visit. And not only hear the story of the 1830s community, but also share their story and sharing experience in that house of worship really captivated me. And I have found that my interest in the material culture and the historic stuff that's left behind the historic sites is something that I'm really passionate about. I just love the the old stuff and the old people.

Lach Mackay 20:41

Tell us a little bit more about your research interests when you were at Cooperstown, Barb?

Barbara Walden 20:45

Uh, Baseball! Yeah, I went to graduate school at the Cooperstown graduate program up in Cooperstown, New York which is a part of the SUNY system SUNY Oneonta. I love church history but I also love baseball and was raised in a baseball family. So two of my loves kind of came together there in Cooperstown, where I had a chance to intern at the Baseball Hall of Fame with their collections department and had a chance to catalog some of those old baseballs. So one of the most powerful experiences I've had in history, American history was holding a Roger Maris, his 61st home run baseball in my hands. That was pretty remarkable. But also while I was there, I had an opportunity to research American outhouse architecture. So if there's any questions about the architecture evolved houses on your woman, I'm ready to take those questions at any moment friends.

Lach Mackay 21:44

Great looks like we do have some questions showing up in the q&a now.

Megan Read 21:49

Yes, so the first question is from Alicia Hall. Please explain Adam God Theory. I can't get my head around it.

Lach Mackay 21:59

Hello, Alicia. I can't either. So Adam God Theory is not something that made its way into Community of Christ. My understanding is that, that uh, that is something that that is first taught explicitly after the schism after Joseph's death. I think some would argue and maybe rightfully so that is kind of a logical extension of things that Joseph's taught in Nauvoo. But Adam God is not something that I feel in any way qualified to discuss, again, not part of our understanding and Community of Christ.

Megan Read 22:39

Alrighty, and another question from Jake Christensen. What can we learn about Community of Christ history through the layout and content of the current Doctrine and Covenants?

Robin Linkhart 22:52

I'm happy to take that question. What I think is helpful about the current Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants is its laid out Logically. So if you want to see the change in Community of Christ, the view of Zion, going from a physical place on earth to an essential place, whether it be Jackson County, Missouri or French Polynesia, you can read about that. It's through the chronology of the Doctrine and Covenants. So you'll see the change in Zion, you'll see the change in a number of concepts, and even the mission of Community of Christ through the crank Doctrine and Covenants.

Lach Mackay 23:32

But I'll add that if you're new to Community of Christ, I find it helpful to start at the end and work backwards chronologically.

Megan Read 23:43

Alright, and so we have another question from Alicia Hall. What is Community of Christ position on the first vision? Is it vital to Community of Christ?

Lach Mackay 23:56

Can I take that one BB?

Barbara Walden 23:58

It's all yours.

Lach Mackay 23:59

Sure. So we, for a number of years and community Christ, have been comfortable with the idea that Joseph had left multiple accounts of that experience. We did as people eventually land on the 1838 account, which is the one that probably is best known two percentages, "This is my beloved Son hear him." But in doing that, we ended up inadvertently converting people based not on any experience of their own they had but in some cases, people were converted by Joseph's conversion experience, which was not the foundational event of the church. We would kind of turn it into that later, but that is not how it was understood in the 1830s. As I think many of you probably know, it was not talked about really publicly much if at all in the 1830s It later becomes critical to the story. But it was not the foundational event for the church, the Book of Mormon was was the miracle in the really important focus early on. So once we realized that we were setting people up for failure by stressing the 1838 account, we backed up and in recent years, we've gone back to more the 1832 account, it's the earliest account, it's the only one in Joseph's hand, it's one percentage seems to be Jesus the Savior. And typically, for example, at our historic sites, when we talk about the story of the church, in our videos or orientation videos, you're going to see the 1832 account. For me, though, what is really important about the first vision is what it says about the worth of all persons. If God cares about a poor, illiterate farm boy, that God cares about all. And so I think we often find meaning in that experience still today, but in maybe different ways than we have in the past. I also am a little nervous about the idea of the the 1820 dating. So we have done some things in Community of Christ, noting that many understand this to be the 20th anniversary. I'm not so sure. I think it might have been a little later on. So I believe that Joseph had an experience with the divine in the grove. I think that as his understanding of the nature of God evolved, his understanding of that experience evolved. It doesn't trouble me that he left different versions at different times. Because I think that's that's how he understood it at that point in his life. So again, I think it reflects his evolving understanding of the nature of God.

Megan Read 27:03

We have another question from Stacey Jackson Roberts. In recent years the LDS Church has made institutional changes without doing any form of institutional repentance. Going off of

what you just mentioned about the importance of confession and repentance. Does Community of Christ believe that extends to the institution as well as individuals?

Robin Linkhart 27:34

That's a great question. And I'm trying to formulate some formulate an answer to that. But think of some examples of an institutional confession. I have found in my experience Community of Christ is really good at seeing the errors and mistakes of our collective church history as individuals and as well as historians, and I think in some ways, Joseph Smith III, lays the ground for that in his memoirs. He's looking back at his life late in his life. He's really good at narrowing in the mistakes that he made along the way. And so I think for many and Community of Christ, as they're looking back to the church history, we've gotten to a point now that we're able to acknowledge the mistakes of those who have gone before us, and focus on learning the lessons of those people who've gone before us through their mistakes. We've gone from ancestor worship, or worshiping the people of the past, to now being able to see the flaws of the people in the past and the mistakes that they made, and how can we learn from those moving into the future? But I'm trying to think of as a time that the church formally confessed of those mistakes. I can see them doing that when it comes to historic people in the past. Lach, can you think of an example of an institutional mistake where there was that confession?

Lach Mackay 28:54

Well, this kind of fits but Joseph the third talks in his memoirs about the military of the church in Nauvoo in the Nauvoo Legion, and says he believes it was a mistake for that spirit of militarism to take hold in the leading authorities of the church. And even at worst mistake for them to use scripture to defend that position. I think back in this is quasi institutional but a number of years ago at an anniversary of the Hauns Mill Massacre, members of the various faiths that share that that history had gathered there to to remember those who were murdered. But Andrew Bolton, and I don't remember if he was in our council 12 by the then or not. So either an apostle at the time or soon would be, as he was talking about the events of Hauns Mill reminded folks that yes, this this is atrocious, you know, violence is never condoned, but that Missouri Had apologized for the extermination order which didn't mean lever will kill you it meant lever will forcibly remove you but of course people were killed Missouri in 1976 rescinded that extermination order and apologized. And Andrew noted in his remarks at Han's middle that day, that that we as a people as a church had not apologized for the, the culpability we had in the Mormon war in Missouri, including accidentally attacking the Missouri State militia at Crooked River. But that's treason, you can't do that. So I also think and maybe some of our world church resolutions, for example, related to the treatment of indigenous peoples, that there have been statements of regret for those kinds of things as well.

Megan Read 30:59

Another question from Rob Lauer. The Hebrew Bible is pretty ruthless in its portrayal of Israelites, patriarch, prophets and leaders. And yet it continues to show the divine at work in Israel story. How might the Bible's approach inform our approach to Mormon history?

Lach Mackay 31:25



So I think in wonderful in powerful ways and forms and that I regularly hear Community of Christ leaders and again, particularly Andrew Bolton, lift up that very example. You know that there were some folks who did pretty horrific things in the Hebrew Bible, who God still work through. And that provides hope for me, and probably others, that that God can work through flawed individuals and I believe has and will come to do so.

Robin Linkhart 32:01

I agree with a lot, I think for many church members who are still dismantling the past, having the scriptures to go back on to see that God was working through flawed people throughout the scriptures gives them hope, as they're trying to disconnect the past and their faith. I think for a long time we viewed our faith and past as one being our shared past or church history. And I don't think we're continuing to do that. But I do see that there are many church members who are continuing to dismantle the past and come to terms with the flaws and the human side of people from church history. I also find that for a lot of people within the church history community for Community of Christ, they find themselves doing more listening than anything, just listening to people as they're doing that dismantling. I think in many ways, you find yourself practicing pastoral care, as well as credible research in that position because their history is hard and and researching things that contradict or conflict with what you thought you knew can be very difficult for people. So having those flood people within the scriptures to go to. There's a certain sense of consistency that's there. And I think it also gives hope to people like me who are definitely flawed individuals that if God didn't work with some of those people in the Hebrew Scriptures, Surely there's hope for me.

Lach Mackay 33:24

Barb's comment reminded me of something I touched on briefly yesterday, I was talking about polygamy in the earliest church yesterday. And in many ways, I think Community of Christ members were grieving in the 1970s 80s 90s. And some still are, that we believed Joseph when it came to his denials of involvement in plural marriage and polygamy. And as we discovered that that's not the case it was just devastating for many of our members. And so we're grieving and we just kind of set our history on the shelf, it was too painful. We just couldn't deal with it. But in recent years, I would say the last 15 years or so, we have started to transition from demythologizing from taking the story apart to starting to put it back together in historically sound and theologically sound ways. And so we were, in some ways able to kind of take the story back off the shelf and then package it in and recognize the wonderful and powerful and compelling and recognize the terrible mistakes and the deeply flawed often all in the same people. But that's okay.

Megan Read 34:48

All right, and from Benjamin Schaffer with the various theophanies I apologize if I'm saying that wrong visions and direct experiences of God in the early church, do you see any on, do you see an ongoing role of Nasus and visions in religious life? How does Community of Christ view the experience of God today? And how does our church history inform the experience of the Divine?

Lach Mackay 35:20

So I think God created people in many different ways. And I think some see the world much more through a spiritual lens. And I think some see the world through more of a natural lens, and I think both are valid and real. And so I do think that there's a place for ongoing theophanies envisions I'm nervous when people I'm more than nervous when people use those to try and manipulate others. But yeah, I think there is a place in the church for those kinds of spiritual experiences I've had some of those myself, but I interestingly, I think consider myself less of the spiritually minded more the natural lens. Maybe that's why I like history. I'm naturally skeptical.

Megan Read 36:25

I mean, we have a question from Steven. I understand the tendency for Barbara's grandmother to teach an eye idealized history. Yet, as Barbara said it was painful to unpack and rebuild at 18. Does Community of Christ leaders teach today's kids and teens a more current history to avoid later pain. And is there still value in the simple tidy and idealized stories for very young children?

Robin Linkhart 36:55

Well, I appreciate the tip of the hat to my grandmother. Thank you, Steven. Community of Christ is continuing to research and develop new histories. Mark shear that former church historian, published three volumes with the church history. That certainly takes a look at the history of our church in an honest way. Different from the church history that my grandmother was learning 100 years ago, or even that she was teaching me 30-40 years ago. The same people are involved in that history, just different sides of the story. What we find ourselves doing now is taking a look at the mission initiatives and the Enduring Principles of Community of Christ today, and taking a look at in the past. Where do we see those early church members practicing the compassionate ministries? Where do we see them pursuing peace and justice? I think for our youth, they want church history to be relevant. And so we're trying to highlight the people in places of our past that helped make that story come alive. In an honest and credible way. Not sugarcoating the mistakes of the past. But taking a look at the past through a different lens as to what can we learn from the people of the past both the successes as well as the mistakes. In addition for the historic sites Foundation, we've become publishing some shorter stories. And one of the publications we just came out with last year was taking a look at children in church history and how our children, youth as well as teenagers making a difference in their communities today. And that was an incredible project to take a look at the youth, and what difference they were making in their time and place that we can learn from today. I think it's helpful for the youth of today to see that it's not just the adults making an impact or building the kingdom of God on earth, but it was people their age just like them making a difference. That's the part of the history that we have been focusing on lately, it's not here. It's not hero worshipping or ancestor worshipping, but more trying to make history relevant to what is happening in our world today.

Megan Read 39:17

Already and from Robin Linkhart, what are some recent discoveries and or historical research that has had significant impact on our understanding of church history?

Lach Mackay 39:33

Robin does ask the hard questions. Barb, do you want to take that one?

Barbara Walden 39:37

Sure. Research is ongoing. That's one of the things we read about in the Church History Principles. And anybody who has published a book knows that once that book is published, some new documentation surfaces journal is found in somebody's attic that gives a whole nother perspective of a history that you thought you nailed down. And so in many ways, being a historian is a very humbling experience. Because just when you think you have an expertise on something, whether it's church history or outhouse architecture, somebody else is coming along right behind you, and in many ways blowing away what you thought you knew. So I think if you learn anything from church history, it's the more you learn, the more you discover, you don't know, there's always more to the story. But some of the more exciting discoveries that I think have been happening. Mark Scherer in the third volume of church history took a look at the International story of the church. And I think that was a real gift to the church in how is the church formed in the Philippines and in Honduras, in in countries in the continent of Africa. I think that was pretty exciting. I think some of the work that David Howlett is doing at Smith College is pretty exciting. And that helps form our understanding of women in the priesthood and what took place in some of the more current history. I think for many historians, there's a struggle in that if you have lived through that part of the history, it surely can't be church history. And so for Mark Scherer to study from the 1960s onward and be able to do the oral histories of some of the people still living today has really been groundbreaking research. In addition to the studies that are being done about some of the first women ordained priesthood members and apostles, I'm excited about that. It's estrogen inspiring, and I think that's good. Lach you have anything to add to that?

Lach Mackay 41:31

So it doesn't feel brand new, but for me, it's been really helpful to discover Joseph Smith the Third's role in returning the church to a focus on peacemaking. So, I believe that in 1830-31, there was a significant focus on peace in the church, but we were soon overcome by the frontier culture of violence in Jackson County, Missouri, in northern Missouri. Have you seen the culmination of that in Nauvoo, the Nauvoo Legion, but Joseph the third turned us back in the Community of Christ, to that focus on Jesus, the peaceful one, and the pursuit of peace. And I was initially kind of skeptical that I kind of thought that our current fees peace focus was probably the result of our leaders having come of age in the Vietnam War era. So the that context, but as I really started digging into it, I am thoroughly convinced that our peace focus is deeply rooted with Joseph Smith the Third, as he kind of reclaimed that strand that element from the earliest church.

Megan Read 42:50

All right from Brian, I recently learned about Doctrine and Covenants 113 in the Community of Christ scriptures were justified The third receives the revelation to ordain men of all races to the priesthood. In the LDS community, the common perception today is that the band started with Brigham Young. Yet it seems that it must have originated in Nauvoo and survived the schism, any more insight about the origin of the band?

Lach Mackay 43:21

So yeah, I think it's section 116. And I, I guess I might have a little different interpretation. I think that Joseph the Third is reaffirming his father's position on ordaining black members, black men. And I really think that it's Conala Doniphan, I think who's done some good work on this. And he, he really places a winter quarters with Brigham Young, furious about an interracial marriage. So I don't think Joseph in my interpretation, gets credit for the priesthood ban. I really do think that's a little later development. And I think Joseph The third is reaffirming that position. Of course, it's happening in as the Civil War has just ended. I am thrilled that we landed on that position at that really difficult, sensitive time. It was so sensitive that when it was the Community of Christ 12, the council 12 were asked to address it, and they were afraid to. So they turned to Joseph Smith the Third and asked him to go pray for additional light. And he comes back with this would become section 116 saying that we should ordain men of every race, but not not to rush it. So this is an example where presentism can cause difficulty because when I read section 116 today, I find elements that are uncomfortable, but I think in 1865 I think it was a pretty progressive position. But it says Don't rush into ordating men that are black. But we did the same thing when we began ordaining women, we made the decision and 84 but intentionally built into a period of time for preparation. So I think it was a pretty, pretty brave move in 65. Tragically, we did not always live up to it. This is an area where I think we have already apologized and need to continue to do so. Despite our official position. There is racism in the church through the years and I'm sure there still is. But you would have anything Barb?

Unknown Speaker 45:44

No, it looks like the next question coming up is along the same topic. And I think I'm always about handing out homework assignments. Great book written by Roger Launius. "Invisible Saints, A History of Black Americans in the Reorganized Church." This is full of not only the history of African Americans in the church from our early members like Elijah Able, and killing her name wonderful biography was just written about her Jane Manning. Jane Manning Yes, be sure to buy Quincy Newell's book on Jane Manning. It's excellent. But it explores their stories as well as as an institution. How did the church evolve after Joseph Smith's revelation, and also takes a look at African Americans joining the church after the Civil War? Great story about Carolina and Benjamin Booker who were living in the south who joined the church and also some of the African American missionaries that were based in Chicago and Detroit, even into the 1960s and people like William Blue, and his work not only in the southern states, like down in Pensacola, and Alabama, but also up in the Kansas City Independence area. When we look at our history, you can find areas where we were on The right side of history and areas where we were on the wrong side of history are some painful stories. Like Amy Robins up in Michigan, and even stories within Bill Blues life, of discrimination of segregation of areas where we were

just on the plain wrong side of history. But you'll also find stories where like Bill Blue and his family are attending a reunion a family camp, where church members surround their cabin, armed there to protect them as they heard rumors of people from the neighboring town wanting to come over and hurt the Blue family. So it's a complicated history and Community of Christ. And again, we find ourselves sometimes on the right side of history and sometimes on the wrong which goes back to that church history principle that talks about confession and repentance, where we have made mistakes and that we have the responsibility to correct ourselves in the here and now going forward.

Megan Read 48:00

So yes, that next question was from Alicia Hall as we face race and ethnic inequality, how does Community of Christ reconcile current and past racism? So, Barb just answered that one

Lach Mackay 48:15

Yeah, we don't.

Megan Read 48:18

And then the next one's from a Lynne Gillette. I'm not sure who this is directed to but while on a mission and beylin 1963 to 1965 became friends. And then we have Lindsay Hansen Park. How has the Community of Christ position changed if at all, about polygamy, specifically, the fact that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy?

Barbara Walden 48:50

Lach, didn't you teach a class on this yesterday?

Lach Mackay 48:53

Yeah.

Robin Linkhart 48:55

45 minute session down to just a few minute answer.

Lach Mackay 49:00

So yeah, I'll do my best. So we have evolved significantly through the years. Our take on polygamy was always we, we think it's wrong. But our take on Joseph's role in its introduction has evolved through the years, we started, really, maybe 1815-1870, approximately saying, Joseph did it, but he repented, we should forgive him. And then as the people who were in Nauvoo, began to die off, we're left with Joseph's public statements, which are all in opposition, and the scriptures of the church which are in opposition. And we became convinced that Joseph had nothing to do with it. And then by maybe 1960, we began to reconsider, and began to think that perhaps it was an unintended consequence of eternal marriage. If you can have fertile spouses in heaven, surely it's okay on earth idea and so, still thought it was wrong, but it might have just been a natural outgrowth of eternal marriage and then beginning in the mid 80s, I'd say 1980s. A number of us shifted to, he did it and he was in all the way, or actually where I land, that is, yeah, I think he introduced it. But I think there's decent evidence to suggest that

prior to his death, he decided it was a mistake and was trying to get it stopped. Now, I don't know if I think he thought it was a mistake because it was going to destroy the church or he thought it was a mistake, because it was wrong. I don't know. But there's decent evidence to support that. And the more I looked at the more sources I'm finding to support that. The reality is we really don't fully understand plural marriage and the introduction and I don't think we ever will. But it's fun to talk about.

Megan Read 50:47

Alrighty, and from a Michael Nielsen. I'm curious about your views regarding recent history. How do you see cultural forces impacting Community of Christ development, the directions it moves or issues it addresses. Are there instances where the church was ahead of cultural change? Or does the church more typically respond to change?

Barbara Walden 51:17

Lach, you want to answer that?

Lach Mackay 51:18

Sure. I think it's it's mixed. I think that often revelation is in response to questions. And so factors that are happening in the culture generate those questions. But often we've been kind of in step with cultural change, but not always, you know, began ordaining women in 1984. Obviously, some Christian denominations made that decision prior to that, plenty has still not made that decision. We in the US began, made the decision to ordain gay and lesbian members in 2013, again, and allowed Community of Christ's priesthood in the US to perform same sex marriages starting in 2013. So that's a little ahead of the Supreme Court decision. But But often the issues that we are working with and trying to make sense of, are the issues that are important in the culture at the time. So I guess I'm not surprised by that. I wish that I could say we were always leading. But that is not the case. But but we're also not always following.

Barbara Walden 52:32

I agree. I think we're a little bit about what I find interesting in the times that we're living in now with this global pandemic. For many people that serve on our board, especially one they often look at, being a historian in many ways is also being a futurist. By looking to the past, you have a pretty good prediction of what could take place into the future. And what we have found in the past is oftentimes when the Community of Christ is experiencing a crisis or a difficult period in their history, that's when some of our best traditions give birth. So as we're experiencing this pandemic were many of our places of worship are temporarily closed and people are isolating and in social distancing, there's the use of technology. And this incredible, an exciting way of forming community while everyone remains at home is taking place. And it's discovering new ways to connect and new ways to create those communities of joy, hope, love and peace that are taking place right now. So it's that that thread through our history that even during bad times, we find this sense of community and these new traditions that give birth that continue long into the future. So I'm curious as to what the historians 30 years from now are going to be writing about in this time and place that we're experiencing right now.

Robin Linkhart 55:23

Special thanks to our guests, Barb Walden, Lachlan Mackay and Megan Read. This online event was immediately followed by our Sunstone Sunday worship, and did not allow time to respond to all the questions participants logged into the Q&A. So we did a special podcast interview with BB and Locke to address those questions. Look for that podcast right here on Project Zion, or check out the show notes for link. As always, thank you for listening to Project Zion podcast.

Josh Mangelson 56:08

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