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Project Zion Podcast

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 0:34

Hello and welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is your host Robin Linkhart and our guest today, our Executive Director of Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, Barbara Walden and apostle Laughlin, Mackay. The reason we are here today is that on Sunday, August 2 2020, Barb and Lach facilitated a Sunday school class exploring how Community of Christ views church history. Now that class was offered online it is recorded and you can find that episode on Project Zion Podcast, featuring that whole class and all the things they shared with us, as well as questions from our live audience. However, we had a number of questions we did not have time to address. So here we are with the rest of the story. Welcome Barb and Lach, please say hello and tell us just a little bit more about you.

Barbara Walden 1:42

Hi, Robin, thank you for your warm hospitality. It's always good to cross paths with you and good to be with you again. I am speaking to you from my home here in Indianapolis, Indiana. And as you shared I serve as the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation Executive Director, and I'm one of three official church historians for Community of Christ. So I'm always happy to get together to talk church history.

Lach Mackay 2:10

Hello, Robin, I'm coming to you from Nauvoo, Illinois Lauchin Mackay here, been here since 2007. I managed Community of Christ Historic sites, as well as have responsibility for the North East Field and the US as an apostle in Community of Christ. That's basically Michigan to Maine to Virginia. Prior to moving to Nauvoo, I was in Kirtland, Ohio for 15 years, born and raised in Jackson County, Missouri. Fell in love with church history after I got to the University of Missouri in Columbia with Russian studies and economics degrees. But I'm now deeply engaged with our story and passionate about our history.

Robin Linkhart 2:53

We are so glad to have both of you with us today. Listeners, we will make certain link this episode to the episode which features the recording that we did for the Sunday school class. But just to give our listeners some context, before we jump into the deep end with these unanswered questions, could you all give us a short recap of maybe the key points of the class so we can just kind of frame things for folks hearing us today.

Unknown Speaker 3:27

I'd be happy to do that. The purpose of the class or the theme of the class where the church history principles, we wanted to get together to talk about the importance of church history, but also recognizing that discovering church history and unlocking the past can be a painful and emotional experience for some, especially those who were raised connecting so strongly their faith and church history when you start to discover the imperfections of church leaders in the past or even the present, that can be reused. challenging and difficult. And so the Church History Principles were created in a way that one could use them as they're studying church history, and especially when they find themselves struggling with their faith and experience in the church with what has happened in the past. So I'm going to briefly run through those Church History Principles, to give folks a grounding as to the theme and kind of the thread of what we were discussing in that class. It was these Church History Principles that I think encouraged and motivated a lot of the questions that came our way. The first Church History Principle is continuing exploration of our history is a part of identity formation. This principle talks about the importance of church history and understanding our identity message and mission today in Community of Christ, that church history in many ways, comes with meaning and it better prepares us as we go into the future if we understand where we're coming from, we can have a better idea of where we're going as a faith community. The second history principle says history informs but does not dictate our faith and beliefs. And this is a really important principle. It's saying that history is important in influencing the decisions we make today. But it does not dictate our faith and beliefs, meaning we are not chained to our past. We can recognize the faults from our past we can repent from our past, but it is in no way who we are necessarily today as far as our faith and beliefs. That's a really important point. The third principle is that the church encourages honest, responsible historical scholarship. This principle encourages church members to explore the past. Reach into the people of the past and the decisions that were made in the past understanding that they are a part of Community of Christ culture. But it's important to that we need to avoid presentism or interpreting the past based on our current worldview and culture instead of the culture of the time. So it's looking back to the past learning those lessons from the past but also recognizing that that was a part of the 19th century or the early 20th century. Within their historical context, they not may not be where we are today and recognizing that.

Lach Mackay 6:30

I'd like to jump in there for just a minute, Barb. I'm seeing a lot of discussion about presentism online in recent weeks and months, and people concern that the term is being abused or even not liking the word. It is quite charged these days. We've been talking about presentism in Community of Christ for years cautioning against that, but I do understand that in some communities, people are using In presentism, as an excuse to say it was okay when something awful happened in the past. That that's, I think an abuse of the word. The goal is to, its context, it's to understand the people of the past in their context, not necessarily judge or clear them, but better understand them and their motives. So I understand that there's a lot of abuse of the term presentism these days, I still think it's really important. It's a valid term. We shouldn't just check it out because some are abusing it. So context critically important and present ism is another way of approaching context.

Barbara Walden 7:49

Thank you. For historians, they are thrilled with historical context. There's no end to researching historical context to gain a greater understanding of our faith community in the past. The fourth principle is the study of church history is a continuing journey. This principle says that you just can't rubber stamp a church history and say this is it. This is all you need to know, we're not going to learn anything more of any historian knows that the minute you publish a book, or the minute you publish an article or present a paper, a new source is going to come around a journal is going to be discovered in an attic, or a documentation found in an archives. That's going to completely change your perspective of that historic person or that event. And so in this fourth church history principle is recognizing that we're not canonizing one version of history, rather encouraging people to read all credible history and come to their own understanding in this ongoing study. The fifth principle is seeing both the faithfulness and human flaws in our history makes it more boldly capable and realistic, not less. And I'm going to read this whole principle because I think it is. It's crucial as we study history. It reads, our history has stories of great faith encourage 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 culture. 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 in pointing out that God through grace uses imperfect people for needed ministry and leadership. I think this is one of the most important principles because it says you're going to find faults in the people of the past and our faith community, in the past or our institution. In the past. You need to prepare yourself for that. I find that through biographies when you read the story of a person and understanding their roots and where they're coming from. It gives you a greater understanding of their actions and their beliefs or even their politics today. It gives you empathy for that person and their journey versus judgment. A number six the responsible study of church history involves learning repentance and transformation. Number seven is 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 evidence. This emphasizes the importance of individuals studying history and coming to their own conclusions, that you just can't look to church leaders and say what do I believe? In our faith community. Our church leaders give credibility to historians and scholarship and they encourage a church members to look to history and draw their own conclusions. Number eight, we need to create a respectful culture of dialogue about matters of history, we should not limit our faith story to one perspective. diverse viewpoints bring richness to our understanding of God's movement and our sacred story. This is again emphasizing the importance of people drawing their own conclusions when it comes to church history, valuing credible scholarship, but also wanting to create a forum where we can have dialogue, where we can discuss people of the past and beliefs of the past, in a peaceful, healthy manner. And number nine, our faith is grounded in God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must keep our hearts and minds centered on God's revelation in Jesus Christ. As God's word alive in human history, Jesus Christ was and is the foundation of our faith and the focus of the church's mission. message. This is an important reminder, especially as we dive into the early church history, that we are the Church of Jesus Christ, not the church of Joseph Smith. So as we see some of the mistakes made by early church leaders as we see their imperfection, we have to be reminded that our faith is grounded in Jesus Christ, and not any individual from our shared past. So that's a brief look at our Church History Principles and what we focused on in that Sunstone Sunday.

Robin Linkhart 12:35

Thank you so much, Barb. I want to give a little context for this class. This is the Sunday following this Salt Lake City sunstone symposium which is kind of an educational cultural conference with all folks under the big tent umbrella of Restoration sharing together. So there's a lot of diversity represented in that conference. Traditionally, we have an Invitational Sunday class at Salt Lake City Community of Christ, followed by an amazing worship service this year in the midst of a global pandemic, everything, including the sunstone symposium migrated to online delivery. So we had lots of different folks joining us for the class that we are following up with today, as well as the worship. That means we had folks who are lifelong members of Community of Christ there, we had folks who are relatively new members of Community of Christ, folks exploring Community of Christ, folks who maybe this was their first time to ever come to something sponsored by Community of Christ, lots of different faiths journeys, understandings of Restoration history and tradition represented in quite a few folks who joined us for that class. So these questions are coming from all different perspectives. And they're a little bit all over the map, I would say as far as content and topic. I have put these questions into little sub header categories and we're going to start with "Visions." Question, the LDS and Utah movements have canonized the first vision and gold plates stories. This belief in their historicity has become an issue of faith. What are the benefits of the Community of Christ, not canonizing Joseph Smith's history and the words of the angel Moroni in their Doctrine and Covenants?

Lach Mackay 14:58

So I think that the Question also contains the answer. The belief in their historicity has become an issue of faith for many people. So by not canonizing, particularly the first vision 1838 account, when we explore other accounts, it's it's not nearly as painful or challenging. There was a time in our distant past when we did lift up that 1838 account, two personages. "This is my beloved Son hear him" and, and convert people on that, but quickly realized, or at some point realized that's problematic. That's Joseph's personal conversion experience. That's not the foundational event of the church. And so by converting people on Joseph's experience, when they discovered other accounts with one person, for example, it could be devastating. So I think there's significant benefit in not canonizing particular account of those multiple versions.

Robin Linkhart 15:59

All righty, here's the next question under visions. This person starts by stating hard question, what to do when history and truth claims overlap, Doctrine and Covenants 13. One claims literal appearance of John the Baptist Doctrine and Covenants 128 20 claims a parent of Peter, James, John to restore the priesthood. If these historical events did not occur, then why isn't the movement assessed as a fraud on the whole?

Lach Mackay 16:41

That is a hard question. Historically, it's pretty clear that that the John the baptist and the Peter, James and john accounts develop in the mid 1830s dan Bogle has a really nice article in 2014 john Whitmer journal on that topic. I think, though, that The the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible are also filled with accounts that that many have understood to be literal, but I do not. And I still find great value in the Christian tradition. I believe that God works through flawed people. I believe that that somebody is not disqualified from ever having God in their lives again, or God working through them, because they have made a mistake. So I think maybe these are hard questions. But at the deeper level, this really reflects the very different places people are approaching these questions from. In Community of Christ. The idea that, that these are literal appearances was just really never part of my experience. I'm confident for others it probably was, but was not a significant part of my experience. And although there's more focus on the John the Baptist, my sense is that the Peter, James, and John narrative really is elevated after Joseph Smith Jr's death. It's there, but it's really elevated after his death to to lift up the the authority of the Council of 12 after 1844. But in many ways, the questions don't. There, they don't really make sense to some Community of Christ members because we're approaching them from a very different place.

Robin Linkhart 18:39

Thank you, Lach. That is a really important distinction to keep in mind as we work our way through these questions for sure. We're going to move on to the topic of polygamy. We just have one question under here and I do want to note to our listeners that Lach provided a session at the sunstone symposium this year 2020 on this topic, you may want to check it out. We also have an interview with Lach on this topic. Alrighty, Thomas Man is a member of your church that would be Community of Christ. Over months, we talked about our two churches, and he asked if Joseph had more than one wife. Thomas's position was no, I answered, Yes and my companion, which I would assume would be a missionary companion, perhaps said, No. What is the common understanding of the members of the Community of Christ?

Barbara Walden 19:39

That's a good question and I think it seems in any church history forum, you can always guarantee a question on polygamy. My question is, is why is there just one question on polygamy? Surely there are 13, 14 questions on polygamy. I think what's important to note is that Community of Christ does not mandate a particular view. on whether Joseph did or did not practice polygamy. That's where the historians come in. And going back to that church history principle number three, the church encourages honest, responsible historical scholarship and encourages each individual to come to their own conclusion on matters of church history. So the question of what is the common understanding of the members of Community of Christ? We are a very diverse group, a very diverse faith community. And when it comes to that polygamy question, we run a broad spectrum of answers from Yes, he absolutely did it and was the founder to No, he absolutely did not do that. And Emma Smith was his only legal wife. So a question like this can be very complicated, especially when speaking to church historians, because we can't answer any question in less than five paragraphs. It's a good thing that Lachlin's here because as you mentioned, he did give that classes so Stone. So Locke, how can you answer that question as what is the common belief among Community of Christ members we have evolved over the last hundred or so years on this issue.

Lach Mackay 21:13

There is no common belief. People are all over the place on this question and can build pretty good cases for their positions from he didn't do it and, and some of our members believe that because he said repeatedly and publicly he didn't do it. Others believe that he was fully involved until the end of his life. Our early position once he was involved prior to his death, decided it was a mistake and was trying to get it stopped when he was killed. We moved away from that as people were in Nauvoo, died off and landed on the he didn't do it and then kind of evolved back may take us he was involved, but decided it was a mistake. I don't think that's just an attempt to clear Joseph of that. Some interesting sources to support that. The reality is with plural marriage, polygamy, we just don't know many of the details was so secretive most of the source material is from decades later. So, so emotionally charged for that time. It's just really hard to reconstruct.

Robin Linkhart 22:19

Alrighty, let's move on to temple we have three questions. What is the Community of Christ take on the temple endowment, Joseph brought four and the wearing of temple garments.

Barbara Walden 22:36

For many Community of Christ members, they will have no understanding of Temple endowment from Joseph Smith or know anything about temple garments. It's just simply not something discussed in Community of Christ because in our history, through Joseph Smith III we just didn't participate in some of the temple endowment and practice that took place in Nabu. So just one Be a part of our, our understanding.

Lach Mackay 23:04

Yeah, I'd say historically, before you know what endowment means you have to know when it's used. So, for Community of Christ members, particularly through the 1950s, and 60s, endowment was this really important concept, but it was the Kirtland understanding 1830s this idea of being empowered by the Holy Spirit, Greg Prince, among others, does a really nice job of exploring the development of the concept of Alvin, based on Luke and Acts where Jesus tells us apostles to tarry in Jerusalem. So they're endowed with power from Allah Hi. So this idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit, still comfortable, I think community price members, we often don't frame it in the context of spiritual formation, this intentional engagement with the Holy Spirit, because a download means different things. Now, the term is not widely used. The idea of garments, Joseph was introduced in Nauvoo. He also though in Nauvoo, prior to his death, apparently took his off because it was too hot. D Michael Quinn argues in his Mormon hierarchy that garments was one of the things he was moving away from, at the end of its life. They did not make it into Community of Christ. They are not part of our experience.

Robin Linkhart 24:25

Very interesting. Next question, LDS leaders give a temple recommend to where the person's before entering their temples. Does Community of Christ have anything similar to this? What is the purpose and use of your Independence Temple?

Lach Mackay 24:51

So the idea of a temple recommend develops in Utah. So it's after the split so not part of our tradition. I think it's really routes are probably in Nauvoo, where you had to prove that you're a tight payer in order to have access to the baptismal font. But again, I think the idea of a recommend is much, much, much later. The purpose of the Independence Temple, it really this is an oversimplification, but it's rooted in 1838 Kirtland temple, this idea of a strong emphasis on empowerment, both spiritually and intellectually. 2/3rds of Kirtland temple were classroom space, and with a very, very significant focus on peace and reconciliation. So patterned after Kirtland, worship, education, church administration, empowerment both spiritually and intellectually.

Robin Linkhart 25:49

Last question under the temple category, how does Community of Christ interpret Joseph Smith's words on work for the dead

Barbara Walden 26:02

Most community priced members would not be familiar with Joseph Smith words on work for the dead.

Lach Mackay 26:12

Yeah, I'd agree with that. We made the decision in about 1970 to remove or moved to the appendix anyway, some of the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that talk about things like baptism for the dead by proxy. So they're not particularly aware of it. Joseph's understandings about work for the dead of course, evolve. He's signing letters to Emma, in Kirtland throughout the Kirtland period, your husband until death, and it's not until Nauvoo that the focus really intensifies on the afterlife. And Community of Christ is not particularly focused on the hereafter. We are focused on building the kingdom of God on earth, the here and now and we just simply understand that whatever is next is in God's hands.

Robin Linkhart 27:04

Alright, any other comments or reflections you want to offer on temple before we move on to race? Alrighty. Okay, under the category of race, we have several questions that came in the first person offering questions, says the following. One of the things I find encouraging about Community of Christ is its difference of position on race and the priesthood as compared to the LDS Church. But I've heard that there are still some problematic elements. Can you speak to the history of race and the church positive and negative? What is the history in the Community of Christ on Black ordination? Are there historical figures of people of color, all types that are significant in Community of Christ history?

Barbara Walden 28:05

Oh, this is a great question. And I want to spend all day talking about this. Because when you look at African Americans in Community of Christ history, it's absolutely fascinating. A few years ago, the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, had a bus tour that went to the historic sites and all the way up to the coast. And it was called for everyone born a place in the story. And we talked about the diverse people from Community of Christ history. And we literally spent an entire day talking about African Americans in the Community of Christ. In the early church, the 1830s and 40s, through the reorganization and into the Civil Rights Movement. So it's hard to come up with just a real quick answer on this question about the African American experience because it's a diverse a diverse experience. There's evidence that there are African Americans being ordained to the priesthood during the Kirtland and Nabu periods. There's, in the reorganization in the 1860s, there was a revelation about African Americans in the priesthood that came to Joseph Smith, the third, that is published in our Doctrine and Covenants today as section 116. And in that section of the Doctrine and Covenants are in that revelation. It encourages African Americans in the priesthood and encourages African American ministry, but it doesn't necessarily go far enough. In that section, it encourages the ordination of African Americans. But it also encourages those African Americans to go out on missions and minister to their own. So it's more or less creating segregated congregations in the 1860s and 70s, that latter half of the 19th century, valuing African Americans but not necessary. Certainly encouraging integration within African American ministry or integration within the congregations. So when we look at our history, both early history throughout the reorganization, and even through the civil rights movement, there are moments when we are on the right side of history as a faith community. And then there are painful moments when we were on the wrong side. So in that section of the Doctrine and Covenants that's encouraging African American ministers to minister to their own. Well, we can look at that now and say that that's wrong, we should have gone farther. When we look at our history, we can see oftentimes the the Community of Christ going along with the trends that were happening in the United States at the time. So there were some moments where we appeared on the forefront and other moments where we were behind or not where we should have meant when I think of people from church history, African Americans who, whose lives are Lesson to us today, both inspiring us, as well as painful stories of segregation and racism. Some of the people that come to mind that I encourage anyone to research. Looking to the early church, the Kirtland and Nauvoo period, Elijah Abel, and Jane Manning are really important people to know. The new biography that came out on Jane Manning, written by Quincy Newell. In it, she talks about the possibility of Jane Manning's family who didn't make it all the way out to Utah initially became members of the Reorganization, and I would love to hear more about her brother and mother becoming members of the RLDS Church in that early period. When we look at the Reorganization, the stories of George Graves and William Fuller and Amy Robbins are important stories and understanding the African American experience. When we look to the 1960s and 70s and 80s. William T. Blue and Pauline Frisbee are important stories to know. So if there's anything that is important in this is when we look to the African American experience within Community of Christ. We can't say that all African Americans experienced this, we can't share their story with these broad strokes because we are a diverse group. And each individual had a different experience based on where they were from based on the congregation that they were involved in as to how welcome they felt, how value they felt. It's a broad spectrum of experience. And that's why on that bus tour, we spent an entire day exploring the lives of some of the people that I mentioned and many more of those from Community of Christ paths, who had very different experiences. So I hope that helps answer that question. I wish I could spend more time on it. There's just so much material.

Robin Linkhart 32:57

Yes, and like Barb said, listeners please pick up on some of those key people she mentions and resources to do a little digging because it is a fascinating history. And I would add to that when we are our best selves, we really endeavor to try to look at the past and learn from our mistakes and hear what we can take forward with us to get better. Okay, ready for the next question? "How does Community of Christ handle what some consider to be colonialist and racist versus in the Book of Mormon?"

Lach Mackay 33:43

I would say that we call them colonialist and racist and repent.

Barbara Walden 33:51

I think we look to the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures that we find that are similar in the same way. You look at it as it's wrong. And as Lach said, you repent of those errors.

Robin Linkhart 34:05

One of the things I appreciate about this question is it really points to the restoration movement as a whole and specifically the Reorganization as we began to move outside of the United States. So we acknowledge the context that this movement emerged in a specific national context. And as we began to move internationally, there were layers upon layers and layers of the race question as well as cultural questions. And you know, what does that look like as we move forward? So appreciate your comments and reflection on that particular question. So let's go to a question that's about early church context. "Study of our church history has a tendency to focus on coming Fourth out of a vacuum and not discussing the cultures and contexts that influence the development of Joseph Smith and others, to respond to develop a new church. My question, to understand the history of our movement, how much and how deep should we discover the past that influence are coming into existence as a faith?"

Barbara Walden 35:28

Recognizing you're asking that question of to historians, the answer is you can never get enough historical context. And never stop reading historical context. Never stop digging go deep. Because the best way to understand our history is understanding the world in which those early church members were living in.

Lach Mackay 35:50

I'll throw in that it's not just church history, that context is critical for, but studying our scriptures as well. New Testament is Hebrew Bible context is critical.

Robin Linkhart 36:05

Alrighty, let's move into something pretty complex the Godhead. Question number one, "What is the Community of Christ view of the nature of the Godhead?"

Lach Mackay 36:20

We're Trinitarian Joseph starts basically Trinitarian in the early 1830s. By Nauvoo he's understanding that there are separate distinct beings God with physical body, that there might have been some very early members of the reorganization that held that position. But Joseph the third wouldn't give them the pages of the Herald the church publication to, to lift that up and and discourage them from the use of the pulpit to teach it and he wins he outlives them. So Community of Christ is Trinitarian. We do welcome diverse understandings don't have a crystal state that people have to sign. So people are in different places on questions related to the nature of God, but the position of the church is Trinitarian.

Robin Linkhart 37:12

Thank you, Lach. This next question for Community of Christ listeners may sound like it's coming from two totally different perspectives but from an LDS perspective, these questions are very much interconnected. "So what is Community of Christ position on Heavenly Mother is she included in worship?" And then a follow up to that from this person? "Is polygamy in heaven celestial kingdom, quote unquote, taught?"

Lach Mackay 37:51

So Community of Christ doesn't understand God to have gender and would understand that, that God has both feminine and masculine characteristics. So you will hear people pray to Heavenly Father but but that doesn't mean that we understand that God has gender and I also hear Community of Christ members pray to Heavenly Mother, but they don't understand them as as separate, not two percentages, one God with with both female and male traits, characteristics. There is no understanding of polygamy in heaven or celestial kingdom in Community of Christ. We would understand marriage and this was Joseph's position through the 1830s and Jesus' position, marriage to be for time only. Not something that lasts into the hereafter and polygamy or plural marriage, not something that was part of community Christ. We Unfortunately, I spend a lot of our energy for generations battling polygamy. I say unfortunately, because we could have been doing more positive things with that energy, but not part of Community of Christ.

Robin Linkhart 39:13

For some of our listeners not familiar with these topics, and specifically those from Community of Christ and others who want to go deeper, I would recommend picking up Carolyn Pearson's book, "The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting The Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men". Very complex issues in some of these questions that we're talking about today. Okay, we're going to move on to handling difference of opinion. "It is not uncommon for evangelical Christian visitors to protest LDS doctrine on the sidewalk during LDS General Conference in Utah. Does Community of Christ received similar visitors during your conferences or other large gatherings?"

Lach Mackay 40:08

So I typically see one group of three or four people that stand between the temple and the auditorium on some days of conference in and I know at least one of them, they, my grandparents were their neighbor. So I stopped and inquire about her family and her kids and have a very civil conversation with her. But but it almost I mean, there's that one small group 2, 3, 4 people mighty experience has been that most anti Mormons don't know enough about Community of Christ to have an intelligent conversation about us. When I bumped into them in Nauvoo, for example, they will sling things at Community of Christ members that have nothing to do with Community of Christ. They just don't know anything about us.

Barbara Walden 41:01

They can often make for an exciting tour, though, and an exciting discussion following. Yes, some of those questions. I remember during pageant season and Nauvoo and Kirtland. You would get those questions. And it would always make for an exciting tour. But so often, when the questions have to do with women's ordination or temple recommends and people not being allowed in the temple, for Community of Christ, we do ordain women and all are welcome in our temple, both in Kirtland and independence. So I think oftentimes for those protesters, we've been quite disappointing. There wasn't much of a fight there.

Robin Linkhart 41:38

For sure, and my experience at World Conference has been it's often the topics of social justice that may be on our conference agenda for that particular conference that draw protesters who have a very different opinion for example, national conference for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ was very active protesting contended at that time. Alrighty, next question, "Can you discuss the Community of Christ concept of faithful disagreement as it pertains to our history and perhaps current doctrine?"

Lach Mackay 42:21

So Community of Christ are the dissenters were the people who wouldn't go west. And so we value dissent and make room for it and have principles of Faithful Disagreement that kind of lay out how it is appropriately expressed. So if the church has taken a position on a topic, members are welcome to disagree, in their personal conversations and discussion in Sunday school, but not in public ministry. So if they're preaching from the pulpit, for example, if they don't agree with the position of the church, they simply don't address it. topic. So principles of faithful disagreement.

Barbara Walden 43:06

I think in a church history setting, you can see that as well. And again, going back to those church history principles and valuing credible scholarship, when issues do come up where people are on different sides of the spectrum issues like polygamy, issues like the Book of Mormon and the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon and those details involved, you will find people disagreeing and arguing with one another. But coming out of those arguments, it's always important that we continue to love one another. In this faith community we're not always going to agree and like Lach said, we have a long history of not agreeing and dissenting. I often joke that it seems the early mission statement of the Reorganization was "You're not the boss of me". It was in my heart that people's voices were heard and Joseph Smith the third created a community that was very much a democratic community where he wasn't the one that was going to say this is the decision, and if you don't like it leave, it was important for him to bring everyone to the table, recognizing that each person's experience is different, and valuing that person. So I think within a church history community, credible scholarship is important, but it's also recognizing that we don't mandate one narrative, or one version of the story that as all of us are doing our research, we're going to come with different perspectives, and different points argue.

Robin Linkhart 44:33

Thank you so many good points there for listeners. If you're interested in learning more about Community of Christ concept of faithful disagreement, we actually have a document faithful disagreement, you can find at cofchrist.org and just put faithful disagreement in the search bar. We'll also put a link in the show notes for this episode of Project Zion podcast. We're moving on now to LDS Church relations. Next question, "Is there anything helpful that members of the LDS church can do to create a shift in the state of leadership superiority to a position of leadership humility that is so beautifully modeled by the Community of Christ?"

Barbara Walden 45:26

That's a great question to which I have no answer a question of how can we shift into a more humble leadership? I wish I had that answer for US politics and politicians, let alone religious leaders throughout the world. Great question. Robin? Lach?. Do you have the answer? I hope you do.

Lach Mackay 45:54

Pass

Robin Linkhart 46:00

Yeah, I think there's a lot underneath a journey of humility and ongoing lifelong journey of faith and each person takes that as individuals regardless of a role of leadership or not for sure. Okay, next question. "What is Community of Christ relationship to today's LDS church? Would you be happy or sad if LDS leaders adopted the Community of Christ and mission statement as their own?"

Lach Mackay 46:38

I think a relation is quite positive. It has not always been so. In fact, Joseph Smith, the third and his first cousin, Joseph F. Smith, at times in the early 20th century would write 30 page letters back and forth to each other, maybe even earlier than that, pointing out the error of their ways. Normally they were battling over polygamy for marriage. They still treat each other as family when they get together and have dinner. Or Joseph the third said sometimes he couldn't eat because he was sick and by his cousins plural wives all of them at the dinner table with Joseph the third really struggle with plural marriage. But they infected us with what was really a family feud. It wasn't just theological differences but but family dynamics at work. Beginning in the 1960s, though our historical communities began to work together to cooperate to share sources and interpretations. That is slowly worked up to leadership and slowly work down to membership. So really quite positive relationships today are anything to add the second half of the question?

Barbara Walden 47:46

Well, I can go back to the relationship what we experienced that the historic sites has improved immensely over the decades, where Community of Christ Historic Sites are often places of debate. Tension among the Latter Day Saints churches today, they seem to be more venues of dialogue and conversation. What we've learned is that we make much better friends than we do enemies. We make much better conversations than we do debates. And so when it comes to the historic sites in Kirtland and Nauvoo, the site directors get along now. And we share visitors from one site to the next. And I think that healthy relationship that we find between the LDS Church and the Community of Christ church, at the historic sites, much of that is because of Lach Mackay creating those built bridges, and valuing those relationships, valuing those people, we've really come a long way. And I have been on LDS tours at the LDS sites where a visitor has made a disparaging remark about Community of Christ. And the missionary has defended us and said, You don't stop talking like that. They're our friends. They're good people. And I think 100 years ago, you would not have witnessed something like that. So I think within the mission of Community of Christ of building communities of joy and peace of healing and reconciliation, that is acted out at the historic sites with our volunteers and staff members, it's important that we value that relationship with the LDS church. And I think a part of it is what Lachlan mentioned was when we opened up our archives, and the LDS opened up their archives, we bonded over a passion for church history, that we may not agree theologically or even culturally on things. But when it comes to church history, we always want to know the truth about what took place in the past. And that love of church heritage has been a wonderful bridge when it comes to the Mormon History Association, the John Whitmer Historical Association, and what we experience at the historic sites, but the second half of that question, but how would you feel happy or sad if LDS Leaders adopted the Community of Christ mission statement as their own. I think it really depends on individual Community of Christ members, but I would say speaking of myself, if they took on our mission, and took action to that mission, I couldn't be happier if they're actively out in the world, building places of hope and love and equality, working for peace and justice in the world we did we live in today, or acting out the mission of Jesus Christ and seeking the peace of Jesus Christ. Well, all the better. But again, we are a diverse community and each person I suppose would come to that question differently.

Robin Linkhart 50:45

For sure, for listeners that aren't familiar with Community of Christ mission statement, it is "We proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love and peace". And as Barb noted, that is deeply connected with our understanding that we do everything we can to partner with God and realizing the peaceable kingdom living in harmony with all persons and all creation that inhabit this planet Earth and we welcome common endeavors with partners wherever we find them from whatever faith because we understand it will take all of us together. Alrighty Community of Christ today. This question reads, "In an online speech I watched Lachlan spoke about the need for more involvement in the art from Community of Christ. What figures from Community of Christ's history were exemplars in literature, theater, music, and the visual arts and what current people are making an impact packed in the arts?"

Lach Mackay 52:05

Immediately, of course to David Hiram Smith, who was a talented painter and poet wrote hymns. I think of his son Albert A Smith, who was a poet and wrote hymns and numerous books, Marietta Walker, really talented writer. He's like the white mask players in Independence, Missouri in the 20th century, John Obits, an immensely talented organist in our past, even things like the 1970s and 80s at Kirtland temple, the Matthews and john Warner and others who wrote and produced and acted in plays, David Howlett does a really nice job of capturing some of those stories. So we would use drama to tell the story of Kirtland to contemporary visitors. Even people like Henry Enway in the past who has done help recreating portrait series making 30s Kirkland and created The equivalent of comic books for children to tell the story of the church. Those in the present folks like Jan Kraybill, Grammy Award nominated organist, incredibly talented, and Romig who uses fabric to create amazing banners for our congregations. Jim dodi, an immensely talented photographer who has captured congregational life, Kathy Loving and Charlie Robinson, who do first person historical interpretation. Think about, and I didn't go to Graceland. But I know that Graceland has an amazing Performing Arts Center in the Shaw Center, really talented instructors. Having said that, I believe that we are really in a rebuilding and reconnecting stage. So I am passionate about that define those gifts to the fine arts that can help us better tell the story.

Robin Linkhart 53:59

I think another interesting thing to note is that when the Temple and independence was built, many, many different forms of art and that could be painting, drawing sculpture fabric, the list goes on and on, were sent to the temple and things continue to be received by the Temple. So we actually have an archive of very diverse are representing the globe and all the cultures of the church, which are rotated and displayed on the walls and in the halls and different spaces of the Temple, which I find fascinating. You can actually stand in the hall and just look at something and imagine who who was it that created that? Sometimes they'll have a plaque you know, that says who it was. Sometimes it just says it came from a specific city or nation and it really draws us in through that dimension of art into a connection between the various members of the church a connection with the history of the church. It's really meaningful in the context of the Temple space.

Barbara Walden 55:16

I agree Robin and Andrew Bolton, former Community of Christ apostle and church history enthusiast has this great presentation that takes a look at the seal for Community of Christ with the lion, lamb and the child. And he looks at how the seal is created in the church throughout the world, and comparing a seal from Australia to that, say, Southeast Nigeria, or in England or the Philippines or in South Korea. And it's really beautiful how you take this one element of art and how it's personalized through through this global faith community. So you can you can see that lion, lamb and child but it looks different. And it's used for different things, or it's created using different materials. And so the material culture itself, in many ways speaks of us as a faith community. And as we think about creating museum exhibits, I'd love to see one that is just based on the church seal, and what it represents to such a diverse faith community.

Robin Linkhart 56:20

Okay, next question in this category, "How do you see current events, future history being preserved and written? What kinds of stories and physical things are being saved for generations to come?"

Barbara Walden 56:38

That's a great question because church history is just as much about the past as it is about the future. For the Community of Christ seminary this past semester, the church history class was involved in collecting materials for COVID-19 and looking into recording people's experiences looking at bulletin documentation and screenshots and zoom worship as to how did our faith community adapt to this global pandemic? And how are we creating community, as well as social distancing and practicing isolation? So that was one way that we were trying to as historians capture the present for future historians. One of the things that we discovered as historians, often when they're faced with a problem, look to the past, how did people of the past deal with this and we look to the epidemic that took place in 1918, the flu epidemic, and we found very little documentation in the archives to give us a better understanding of how did the people in the past adapt to this global pandemic? What can we learn from them, and in reality, there just wasn't a lot of documentation to send us forward. So for students in the seminary, they thought it was important that that for future generations we not put them in the same place that we're in, and so they ended up donating 75-80 pieces of material to the archives that help capture how we have responded as a global faith community. And it's exciting to see documentations and oral histories from not only our church members in North America but all over the world. When there's a lot that we need to work on, though, when it comes to saving the history of today. Lachlan has mentioned the importance of saving emails and the electronic data that helps tell the story of what the faith community is today. It's also important that we recognize that our stories, our church history, so for the Community of Christ historic sites Foundation, we keep saying over and over again, your story is church history. And we've been encouraging people to save their families artifacts that help reflect their family's journey in Community of Christ. And that's anything from pieces of art to historic hymnals, to maybe that Book of Mormon that a missionary gave your great great grandfather, when your great great grandfather was converted into the church is recognizing that our history is not just Joseph Smith and Emma Smith story. It is, you know, your family's story is you as an individual and how you have come into this community. So our archives is happy to accept information from church members, whether it's electronic data or it's the old stuff like the the old scriptures and journals for Community to Christ historic sites. They're doing what they can to preserve history at the historic sites at Kirtland Temple and the Plano stone church, Joseph Smith the third's Liberty Hall and the Joseph Smith historic site as well as heritage Plaza in Independence, Missouri, and Laughlin is working on oral histories. There's been some exciting movement in collecting oral histories from pastors leaders who are still alive today and have an important story to tell, like you want to talk about that oral history project you're working on.

Lach Mackay 1:00:10

We're particularly focused on trying to capture initially the general officer stories, but then spreading out and a significant focus on the international expansion of the church as well. So we're going to be insignificant focus for the second half of 2020 to try and take advantage of what for some is a little downtime.

Robin Linkhart 1:00:34

This really fascinates me because a question that continues to rattle around in my brain is how do we capture digital information, data, letters, all that kind of stuff that, that I know, just discovering, like a diary from someone in the church in the 19th century or early 20th century can be such a treasure trove of information and insight. And, and I, you know, I think families even you know, as I think about my own family and things that my mother had in the photo albums, that I have in digital form, so it's it's an interesting conundrum or challenge of how do we preserve history to pass on down. Okay, last question today. "What does pastoral care look like within Community of Christ?"

Barbara Walden 1:01:35

That's a great question. And I think it really depends on each congregation as to how pastoral care looks. One of the things I appreciate about Community of Christ is the importance of pastoral teams. So there are some congregations that has that have a single pastor, and that pastor oversees or the administration of the congregation as well as provides the pastoral care and But in many ways, it's recognizing that a single individual cannot meet all the needs of the congregation. So many congregations and Community of Christ have what they call a pastoral team. And that's recognizing the gifts and talents of individual members in leadership, who can reach out with phone calls to people's homes. What is growing increasingly is zoom calls and zoom gatherings. We have some people that are very good when it comes to relationships, and creating community. We have others that work as excellent administrators, some who are gifted in worship, and creating a worship environment. We're all feel welcome. And so with a pastoral team, you have a team of individuals with their own strengths and gifts and talents working together to provide that pastoral care whether it's in a congregational setting in worship, or it's a one on one visit, visiting people in their homes or in their hospitals or through zoom and phone calls. It's it's pretty diverse, just like our faith community is pretty diverse. So that really doesn't answer the question of what does pastoral care look like? Because all over the world and Community of Christ congregations, it looks different. But I think one thing that remains the same is the importance of valuing all people and valuing their experience and creating those relationships where people feel comfortable within our faith community. It's just expressed in a diverse in diverse forms in different ways throughout the church.

Robin Linkhart 1:03:46

Yeah, that's really a deep question. I think it's interesting to look back on how we have organized congregational life in Community of Christ and we always describe congregations against the backdrop that Barb described that, you know, we have such diverse cultures, context, sizes, giftedness resident and congregations. And we really tried to liberate our congregations to live into their giftedness and stretch and grow together as they welcome others, and invite the gifts of all to be part of congregational life. So it is this broad diversity, but we've also had a propensity to kind of organize congregational life as we look through, I'm thinking of the decades of my life of the different ways. You know, we had a pastor and assistant pastor, we have a time of commissioners in the congregation that had different departments. We've had a long history of women's department that was so integral to providing pastoral care and of course, as we moved into embracing both genders into ordination that took on a different life. When I was a young pastor, we actually had a pastoral care commission and an individual in charge of that so that feeding and nurturing and caring actively present with membership outside of Sunday morning, also included sacramental ministry of providing the administration laying on of hands of being present with people in the times and trials as well as the joys of life and the seasons of life that might walk them through, when is it time to talk about you know, baptism for your children, blessing of children, we used to also have something called cradle role ministry that was part of a pastoral care function, and often it would be women of the church but not always that would walk with young families, from the time a child was born, you know, on many years as supporting their development and, and just being present in people's lives in such a way that we can hear their story, provide that safe space for them to share about their life, but but to hear those things that clue us into what the needs of that family or that person are. And I think Barb mentioned at the beginning of her response, this is all couched in our deep understanding of the importance of authentic relationship with one another which, which is such a core understanding of Christian community. All righty, we've covered a lot of topics today. Is there anything else that either of you would like to share with our listeners before we wrap it up far.

Barbara Walden 1:07:02

I just encourage people to take the time to take a look at the Church History Principles that I had briefly summarized at the very beginning. And encourage folks, of course, to read more on Latter Day Saints history and discover people of the past, but also recognizing that we, we do not come from perfect people, that as you dig deep into church history, you're going to find those with flaws. You're going to find people toppled from their pedestals pretty quick. So just as we are imperfect today, they were imperfect back then. And there were plenty of mistakes made in the past. But there are also wonderful examples of people building community and doing their best to alleviate those living in poverty and suffering, doing their best to eradicate racism. History is important. I think it not only tells us where we've come but it has helps guide us into the future and to correct some of those mistakes of the past and become better disciples of Christ.

Robin Linkhart 1:08:07

Lach?

Lach Mackay 1:08:10

Would love to keep answering questions lmackaychrist.org. Track me down. I love talking church history.

Robin Linkhart 1:08:20

Yay. I hope you pick that up listeners and we'll be sure to put locks email and Barb's email in our show notes if you have any follow up questions for either one of them. Mark and Barb, thank you so much for being with us. today. I want to share with our listeners again that project sign podcast is featuring an episode recorded the class the original class, delivered through Salt Lake City Community of Christ and where you can hear it that full episode. Also I want to let you know that both Lach and Barb are frequent guests on Project Zion podcast. You can find both of them under our cuppa Joe series, which is dedicated to all things related to church history. Episode 11, one of our first episodes entitled Jesus or Joseph featured Barb Walden with Andrew Bolton. Those are just a few places where you can hear more from Barbara Walden and Lachlan Mackay. Thank you listeners for spending time with us today. This is your host Robin link card and you are listening to Project Zion podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Take good care. We'll see you next time. Bye Bye.

Josh Mangelson 1:09:51

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