

341 | Historic Site Foundation Autumn Lecture Series | John-Charles Duffy

Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 00:17

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

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome. This is Cuppa Joe, where we explore restoration and history there at Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host today, Karin Peter. And we have our guest, John-Charles Duffy. John-Charles is an author and historian and a professor of comparative religion. He lives in the state of Ohio, which for our folks from outside the US is up in the northeastern part of the Continental USA. So welcome, John-Charles.

John-Charles Duffy 01:04

Let me hear,

Karin Peter 01:06

We're so happy that you're with us today. I want to let our listeners know that we're recording on my end via my cell phone this morning, because we had a massive storm where I live and so if the sound is a little bit different, that's the reason today. So John-Charles, your your lecture, which is the topic of our interview today is from the Historic Sites Foundation Autumn Lecture Series. And this title is "A Global Family: Strategies For Visualizing and Narrating Community of Christ's Global History". That's a bulky title, but I must admit, it caught my eye, it caught my interest there. So you kind of begin in that lecture by sharing that, that your lecture is not so much about telling a story of Community of Christ global history in this brief lecture that you offered, but it was more about how we tell the story of Community of Christ. So let's kind of begin there. What is your interest and how the story of Community of Christ is told?

John-Charles Duffy 02:16

Sure. So for the past few years, I have been working on and off, mostly off unfortunately, on what's supposed to be a short Illustrated History of Community of Christ as a global family. The idea is that this would accompany the existing short Illustrated History of Community of Christ. That was produced several years back by Barbara Walden and David Howlett and John Hamer, which listeners may be familiar with. The idea, I'm part of the church's Church History and Sacred Stories Team. And we had wanted to put together something similar that would highlight the church's international presence more than that initial Illustrated History did. But that's a big challenge. How do you? How do you tell in a coherent way, a story that is taking place all over the world. And so that's one that I spent quite a bit of time thinking about over the past few years, in addition to accumulating what information I could find

about the church's history outside the US, it's a somewhat underdeveloped area, it's, it's, I'm hoping that this short book, once I finally get it finished, can be a first step to beginning to accumulate more information and more stories about Community of Christ outside the US. Because it's, there's a whole segment of our community, whose history is certainly not well known to me, as a member of the church in the US, but I think needs to be held up and integrated into our sense of who we are.

Karin Peter 03:54

Well, indeed, our understanding of our history often gets centered on the, the shared history with the LDS tradition, the 14 years in the northeast US. And then, of course, Missouri, and from Missouri. So I was really caught by this idea of telling it from a perspective from outside the US. So how did you determine what the most important aspects of this would be? what needed to be included in your project? And how, how do you imagine this project can shape Community of Christ?

John-Charles Duffy 04:29

There's a couple questions there.

Karin Peter 04:31

I forget you're a professor and you know the tricks there!

John-Charles Duffy 04:37

So yeah, so with regard to the question of how one begins to tackle this task, um, so yeah, there's there's a wealth of data. And so how does one decide what to include? And there there are a couple problems here. I mean, one is that the fact that this books going to be very, very short, which in theory should have been an advantage. My idea was, oh, yeah, it's just Short Illustrated History 100 pages lots and lots of pictures, not all that much text, it shouldn't be hard to turn this thing out. But a major difficulty in deciding what to include in that very limited space. And so one of the, one of the little, I guess, mental images that I use to make this decision is I asked myself, okay, if I were to pull back to a global level, my metaphor here is Google Maps, you pull up Google Maps on your computer, and you can zoom in, or you can zoom out. And a lot of times the way that we've told the history of Community of Christ has been zoomed in on the United States, even more specifically on this sort of Midwestern Northeastern portion of the United States, which is where the churches headquarters have historically been located. So I asked myself, Well, if you pull back on Google Maps back out to the level where you can see the whole world map, what would still be visible? At that point? What would you still be seeing at that point, because when you're playing with Google Maps, when you zoom in, you see certain things. But then once you start zooming out, things start disappearing local landmarks, and streams and mountains and hills and cities, and so on, just drop off the map as you zoom back, because they're just not big enough to count anymore at that level. And so what would still count, if I'm looking at that global level, and what might I start seeing, if I'm trying to picture the history of the church, that global level that I would not be seeing when I'm zoomed closer in toward the United States that because I guess my my mental image here.

Karin Peter 06:45

That's a great image, especially as our listeners try to kind of grasp what it is that you're doing in your, in your project, I must admit, I'm wondering if some people, especially people who are really us centric, had a bit of an ouch point there with what doesn't matter anymore when we zoom out to that level. I think it's hard sometimes for us, church people to understand, from the global level, what matters and what doesn't. So that's a very interesting metaphor, thank you.

John-Charles Duffy 07:17

And let me give an example of how that plays out. So as an example of how it can shape the way I the way we think about the history when you look at her level. So when we map the early history of Community of Christ/the Latter Day Saint/the Restoration movement, during that period from the 1820s, up to the death of Joseph Smith, Jr. A very classic way to map it is you focus on places like Sharon, Vermont, Palmyra, New York, Kirtland, Ohio, Independence, Missouri, Far West, Missouri, Nauvoo, Illinois, those places where the churches headquarters shifted. And so you have a map that's focused again on that Midwestern Northeastern portion of the United States. And those become sort of the key places you're thinking about in terms of where does our story happen? Okay, but during that very same time period, 1820-1844, if you zoom back to the global level, there's a very different way you could potentially map the story of our community at that stage, if you pull back to that level. And I've actually I did this in the, the the presentation that I gave in October as a PowerPoint slide, when you pull back to that level, all those places, Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo, they kind of just coalesce into one giant blob, which represents kind of the center place. But then you can start tracking as well on the map, all the places where members of the movement began reaching out, hoping to draw people in other places into the movement. So you can imagine a line going out from that big center place blob, a little farther to the west to what was then the Indian Territory, where the first missions to Native Americans were occurring. Imagine undermine going up to the Toronto area of Canada, where again, there were missions happening early in the movements history. Imagine another line going over to the British Isles, where there was a very important mission that occurred and 1000s of people join the movement and most of them eventually moved over to the United States. You can also trace a line that goes to the British Isles through Europe over to the Holy Land, where Orson Hyde, one of the early apostles made a mission trip during the 1840s. Then you could trace lines from the British Isles down around Africa, through the Indian Ocean over to Australia to indicate the first missionary commissioned from the British Isles to go to that part of the world. And you could trace another line going from the United States again down around Africa across the Indian Ocean over to French Polynesia, where eventually 1000 people join the movement all of this before 1844. And so you can see already by the time you get to the death of Joseph Smith Jr, which people often think of is sort of the, the end of the first phase of the movements history, you have a movement that has become internationalized, that eternalism that internationalization is relatively modest, you know, we have a, I guess, a thumbtack in Australia and a thumbtack over in Palestine, that there's not much happening there. But you do have growing communities in the British Isles in French Polynesia. And so you have an increasingly international movement, a movement that is

starting to become, to use the phrase, I keep coming back to a global family. But again, if you're thinking of the movement in terms of Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo, you can very easily lose sight of those international developments.

Karin Peter 11:00

So you mentioned the slide where you show these, these early movements. And I want our listeners to remind our listeners to go to historicsitesfoundation.org, and we'll remind them again at the end, and watch this lecture, because the slides, the graphics that you provide, really do shift one's perspective. When I think of the early church, I hear of the different missions, but they're all these separate sentences in the story. And until you see them all, as you have them on your slide with all these arrows, you forget the the more global nature of what was happening in the movement. So what are some other models? You talked about some of the initial challenges, other than the Google kind of metaphor for visualizing how the story can be told, and you narrate through some different models. Can you talk about that a little bit?

John-Charles Duffy 11:52

Yeah. So one model, which I think comes very readily to mind, and in fact, I was just using that model. And the story I was telling, is what I like to call the center out model. So the idea is that we think of a center where a lot of things are happening, that's the nature of centers, and then the church expands internationally as people move out from the center into other parts of the world. And that is certainly one important way that the global family has come into being. But it's not the only way that people have been drawn into the movement. And so I've I've been, you know, pulling information together and thinking about how to tie this all together, I've been challenging myself to deliberately look for alternatives to the center out model. And one alternative is the precise opposite of the center out model. It's a model of people being drawn inward. The graphic that I like to use for this is imagine the center represented by the Temple with its its spiral, spiral spire. And then imagine a spiral of all these arrows kind of coming in from the edges of a circle, moving in toward the center, like a great whirlpool. And that was a model I had in mind really early on, as I was putting the book together. And when I was thinking, as was, you know, we talked about, and every part of the world where Community of Christ members today can be found. there's a backstory. So we often when we're telling the story of the movement, and its origins, we focus on the backstory of what happened in the US, right? so there are mostly white Americans coming together to form this movement. In between the 1820s and 1840s. We kind of traced that backstory, we'll talk about events in American history, and American religious history, like the great revivals, the great awakenings. That's a backstory that we can tell to our movement, but when you go to, let's say, French Polynesia, and people in French Polynesia are being drawn into our movement, they have a backstory too that we could tell. You know, what's the backstory of how it is a first of all, just what is the backstory of French Polynesia? How do people come to be living on these little islands way out in the Pacific in the middle of nowhere. And then what's happening in French Polynesia in the early 1800s, which creates a situation where when the missionaries from the US first arrived there, they find people who are already Christian. In fact, the missionaries are invited to

stay in the first place where they arrived, because those people had already been converted to Christianity by Tahitians, who themselves have their own backstory of how they became a Christian. But they didn't have a minister. There had never been like a French missionary, for example, who wanted to go live on their island. And so they invited the American missionaries from the Latter Day Saint movement to stay become their ministers. Sorry that there's a whole other backstory we could be thinking about in terms of how our movement comes into being. In Haiti after World War II, you get Christian congregations in Haiti who become interested in affiliating with what's then the Reorganized church. Again, those congregations have their own backstories, we could be telling. And I think as we begin to, this is not going to happen in the little 100 page Illustrated History. But I think part of developing our global history is beginning to trace those backstories. It's it's a very ambitious project, it's when I can't possibly undertake right now. And if I just kind of overwhelming to think about, but it's important, I think, not to think of Community of Christ as having this, this primary stream, this primary backstory, which has to do with like white Americans, and then other people just kind of like get grafted on that story here and there as we go along. And the only become interesting to us when they become part of our story. In other words, we're only interested in Haitians, once they become part of what was then the Reorganized church, right? Becoming conscious of ourselves as a global community means being aware of the many backstories that are flowing together, toward again, I like to use the temple as the symbol flowing together toward this toward the temple, bringing those histories, bringing those experiences, and they all together create this thing that is now Community of Christ. That's another model. And then my third model, which is I think, it's always the more realistic model is, it's a cat's cradle, I was raised in the LDS church, and there was for a while in the 90s, the LDS Church is women's organization, the Relief Society, one of the women leading that movement was a Japanese American named Chieko Okazaki. And she was kind of famous for giving sermons where she would use object lessons. And one of her object lessons was, as she stood at the pulpit, preaching, she proceeded to take some string and create a cat's cradle design right there at the pulpit. And so you know, she unfolds the design, and you have this, this kind of rectangle with all these, you know, X's woven through it. And she used that as a metaphor for the church community, all these people who have become connected to one another as a kind of a network. And she said that Jesus Christ is the space between the threads that creates the pattern. I really like that way of thinking about church community. And in fact, when I was doing my research for this book, I discovered that David Brock, a former apostle in the RLDS church has a variation on that same idea, he has a really interesting article in The Herald, where he talks about being at a meeting in Texas near the Mexican border, a meeting of Hispanic RLDS people, and he starts thinking about all the kinds of connections that exist between people in that meeting. And he starts to the metaphor he uses is connecting the dots, I mean, on those connect the dot pictures used to play with as a kid where you connect line dot one, two, line dot two, dot three dot four, and eventually a picture comes into being, I started imagining all the different ways that you can start connecting people in this meeting to people outside the meeting. And so you can start drawing connections from this meeting in Texas to Mexico, or from this meeting in Texas to California, or to this place, or that place based on the network of people who know each other. And as he starts getting farther and farther afield, eventually, he's drawing lines from this little gathering in Texas, to places like Kenya, and the Philippines. And so

there's this wonderful sense of connection, a complex web of connection that binds us together as a community. And that becomes interesting to think about telling the stories of how that complex web comes into being. Those are three major models I play with.

Karin Peter 18:37

So you said that number three is the more realistic model. Have you decided which model you're going with in this?

John-Charles Duffy 18:46

Well, I tend to use a combination of all of them. But when it comes to try to visualize connectivity within the global church, I prefer the network model. So again, it's really, really important, I think, to move away from a model where there is a center. I mean, certainly there is a center to our church community. We have a literal central headquarters in Independence, Missouri, the temple is there as a symbolic center. demographically, we have a center 60% of our membership is still located in the United States. There's no question that that's the center. But I think it's important to find all turn ative ways of envisioning that that's that's the easy way to envision the church. And whether we're talking about people going out from the center or being drawn toward the center. That's the easy way to think about it. But I think the more useful way to think about it for the purposes of envisioning ourselves as a as a community that embody oneness and equality and Christ. I think the network model is better, because it lets you start thinking about the global church as a place where people connect, not just because they people on the margins are tied to the center. It's this complex web that moves in different directions and you can't see it right now, but I'm moving my hand in all kinds of ways as we speak. Imagine this complex web, where it's a little hard, the more you look at it to figure out where the center is, or it's not so obvious anymore where the center is. And that's really important, because as long as the center dominates the way we think of who we are, it's harder, I think, to embody equality in Christ. There's no question that the center plays important roles in helping to create our oneness in Christ, but equality in Christ is going to require that we resist the model of center versus margins. Because center versus margins is always a relationship of inequality. And the network model, I think helps us to do that.

Karin Peter 20:43

So I can see in what you're sharing that this idea of, of the text that you're preparing the project that you're working on, really embodying equality and oneness in Christ as a central principle, do you have other principles or ideas that have become important to you or prioritized in your thinking in how you're going to share the global story?

John-Charles Duffy 21:06

Yes, so there are four major phrases or mandates from recent sections of Doctrine and Covenants, that I keep coming back to that inform the way I think about the story theologically. The first one is what I mentioned already, the idea of the global family, Doctrine and Covenants 161 tells us to "heed the urgent call to become a global family". And I'm, I'm interested that word become you know, we, we

aren't just a global family automatically, by virtue of being a church with membership in different parts of the world, we have to become a global family. So that's one key theological mandate that drives my thinking. Another one is the idea of people being drawn together into a community. Doctrine and Covenants wants to see three tells us that God is calling for a prophetic community to emerge drawn from the nations of the world. And that I guess it's the the outward in model, right, this idea of, I try very hard as I am thinking about this book and figure out how to narrate what happens I try very hard to avoid language about the church expanding, or the church going out or moving into new places, even though there's no, me, there's no question that that is what happens. But using that language reinforces again, that idea of a center that dominates the show, I prefer instead to talk about people being drawn together into a community. And the another one that I use a lot is this idea of oneness and equality in Christ. In particular, there's a passage in Doctrine and Covenants 165, that tells us we need to more fully embody our oneness and equality in Christ. And so I'm thinking a lot about what are the mechanisms that we have used as a church community to do that? How do we more fully embody oneness and equality in Christ? What are the initiatives that we use to accomplish that? And then finally, I come back a lot to the mandate and Doctrine and Covenants 164, that the mission of Jesus Christ is what matters most for the journey ahead. Part of our story as a global family is that we are people who, in the various parts of the world, where we are located, are carrying out Christ's mission. But I'm especially interested in the ways in which we collaborate, to carry out Christ's mission, not just in multiple locations, but people in different locations, finding ways to work together to carry out Christ mission that I think becomes a really important part of the story to tell.

Karin Peter 23:36

So as, as you seek to tell the story in ways that accomplish these the community, people drawn into this network or web of community, becoming this global family, you use some different techniques in your lecture. But you mentioned some of the earlier when you talked about how when we tell the story, we put it into early US history into its historical context, we tell the backstory, and that the backstory from other traditions is equally important. So how does, how does it look the story of the church, when you start to apply these principles and these models, what does it look like for the story of the church when it's placed into a world history context?

John-Charles Duffy 24:20

So yeah, there there there are a couple of different ways I could approach answering that question. I think the one I'll go for here is to say so if you look at, if we go back to this idea I mentioned earlier of a world map showing the international community from 1820s to 1844. You know, with these these dots in the US and Canada and the British Isles and Australia, and Palestine and the Pacific Islands and the lines connecting them if I go back to that model. If I then jump forward, I for chronological purposes, I've gone ahead and I've I've stuck with the The chronology that Mark Scherer developed in his trilogy, The Journey of a People. So I think 1820's-44 has one phase, then 1844 to hymn 46 as a different phase, which corresponds to Joseph III and Fred M Smith's presidencies. And then the final phase is after 1846, I find that works, although I'm interested in it, because I think 1945, the end of the Second World War is

a really, really key period in terms of what's happening on the global stage. So if you go from 1844, up to let's say, 1945, that's a period of world history, where European countries plus the United States creates expanding empires, until you get to a point where just before World War I, 85%, of the territory on Earth, either was or had been earlier, a possession of some Western power. So it's a period of colonialism and empire building. That's the major thing happening on the world stage, and the spread of Christianity around the world is part of that story. Christianity went to parts of the world that hadn't been before, because it followed these European empires. And the growth of the RLDS church internationally, is also part of that story. Then you get to 1945, and after the Second World War, those empires fall apart, it's an era of decolonization, it's an end of it's a period where colonies are now becoming independent, it dramatically transforms the way the international community is structured, you begin to have new kinds of global initiatives like the United Nations, people start talking about this thing called globalization. Technology makes it possible for the world become a smaller place, which means it's possible to be a global family in a very different way. So if that's kind of the big picture of world history, what's going on with our community, is that by the time you get to the end of World War II, the end of that second phase, our community is still really heavily Anglo American. Most of our membership is in the US, Canada, the British Isles, and Australia. That's where the vast majority of our members are found, hence, Anglo American, American plus British. We had, at that point, a quite healthy minority, about 2000, strong in French Polynesia. And then we had a presence in a smattering of other countries, mostly European. But that was basically who we were up to the end of the Second World War. After the Second World War, that changes dramatically, we become considerably less Anglo American. We are still a predominantly American movement. 60% of our membership is in the US, most of that is white, but not all of it. But the our, our presence in other countries begins to expand in the US. Okay, let me rephrase that, I'd say expand, increasingly, people from more and more parts of the world are drawn into international community with us. And at the same time, because this is a phase of world history, where decolonization is the dominant trend, the former colonies are asserting themselves, asserting their independence, asserting the value of their cultures, that affects Community of Christ as well. And so you have members of our faith community in places like Japan, in India, the Asia Pacific region is really important to this development, who start pressing the church to rethink the relationship between culture and the gospel, and to allow the church to become diverse and culturally appropriate ways. And that because of a really important impact on the way we go about embodying oneness, and equality and Christ. That, in a nutshell, is one way of telling the really big picture of what's happening.

Karin Peter 29:07

I can remember growing up RLDS when the logo, if you will, that would be on official church documents and as a kid, it would be my tithing statement would come in an envelope and the return address logo became a global image to reflect that changing understanding of who we were as a people. So you've got this project, you have your models that you've looked at, you've made some decisions on what you're going to do, and maybe more importantly, not going to do and you just gave us an example when you corrected your own language of expansion. You in your lecture, then move into talking about

some what I call several landmarks that were new to you, as you began to explore the global story of the city. So can we take a few minutes and just share a couple of those with our listeners that you you found interesting as in your study?

John-Charles Duffy 30:08

Yes. So one thing I'm constantly paying attention to, as I go through my data, and I decide, you know, what's most important to include is I'm really interested in images, events, landmarks, as you say, where we see the embodiment of a more multilingual, multicultural, multi ethnic and international community. And one of those landmarks happens in the language of the date here, I believe it is the 1960s, I take that back. 1973. So in 1973, there was a new mission presidency in French Polynesia, and it consisted of Etienne Vanaa, who was the mission president. His counselors were Allen Breckenridge a white American, and Jean Bouissou, who was French. And so we had what the Herald announced at the time, they believed it to be the only international and trilingual mission presidency in the church. That's an important landmark. And I want to signal the fact that it's a landmark that did not occur in the US, it did not occur in the center, it occurred out on what we could call the margins. That's where this multi ethnicity internationalization was occurring. Another landmark I like to use is the year 2000 when Grant McMurray became president of the church, that was an important landmark in terms of how our community was defining itself because he was the first church president who was not a Smith descendent. He was, his First Presidency was also the first time that we had a First Presidency, composed entirely of people who were not Americans. Which I hadn't realized. And I began doing the research for this project. And the fact was kind of it was I learned it only because it was it was buried in one of the footnotes in Mark Scherer's Journey of a People. And I was like, Why is this not like being prominently displayed in the main text? This strikes me is a big deal. We have Grant McMurray, who's a Canadian. We have Kenneth Robinson, who's Australian. And we have Peter Judd, who's British, still Anglo American, I suppose they're still Anglo,

Karin Peter 32:23

And male.

John-Charles Duffy 32:24

But yeah, me, I guess that needs to be said as well. But still, that's that's, that's the first time that it happened. It's the first time that the Americans are literally kind of, you know, edged off the stage. And as non Americans are becoming the three people at the center of the leadership. That's interesting landmark. Another image I like to use, and this will definitely show up in the book, is it depicts the I don't know if they're the very first but they're certainly some of the first volunteers in World Service Corps who were from outside the US. And I have to say, I'm very pleased with the way World Service Corps, the people who ran that program, were really self conscious about getting away from the center out model. So World Service Corps became an organization where people are moving in multiple directions, not just out from the center place, not just from rich countries to poor countries, you have different kinds of movements and flows and networks being established. And in this case, you have the

first instances of people outside the US being brought to Independence into the temple to work as volunteers World Service Corps. And the photo I wish your your your your viewers could see it. It's just for young women and let me get their names and their ethnicities here. So the four women are Joo Kyoung Han from Korea, she was a convert to what was then still the RLDS church. So she was a first generation member of the community. Another is Eva Wasonga from Kenya. She's a second generation member of the community. Then there's Jennifer de Guzman from the Philippines, she was third generation. And then there was finally we get to Fanny-Ludwige Tuira from French Polynesia, who was fourth generation, I think it's a really wonderful way of visualizing, we can say embodying the international nature of our community by in that case, the year 2000. Those are the kinds of moments or images I'm really interested in latching on to.

Karin Peter 34:26

And ones that most people in Community of Christ would be unfamiliar with.

John-Charles Duffy 34:32

And arguably, you know, one could say it's not all that significant. Right? This again, has to do with the question of what you decide to include, but if we're interested in highlighting international connections, multi ethnicity, diversity within our community, these moments become more important.

Karin Peter 34:50

Absolutely. So, John-Charles for just our listeners kind of get an understanding I I develop an outline before we have these interviews, and I didn't think of this as I was preparing for the interview, but it just came up. So I'm going to ask it. And if you don't answer, that's okay, our editors can take it out, but as I listened to the autumn series of lectures, and granted, it was all about the global nature of the church, one thing that became apparent was the role Graceland College played in the international network developing more substantially. And how as people came into contact with the church, who lived outside the US, many people were invited to attend Graceland College, and this would be from early on, and then went on to be leaders in the church, either in the US or in other places in the world. Did you notice anything along that line? What would you say what the role of Graceland College played in the international development of the church?

John-Charles Duffy 35:59

Yes, you're absolutely right. And there are a couple things that I can think of kind of off the cuff without going back and sorting through my notes more. But a couple of things I can think to say right off the bat are one thing I've been trying to keep track of are the different kinds of ways that the church enters other countries. Which is to say, I'm interested in the different kinds of ways that people outside the United States get drawn into the community. And Graceland shows up in some of those stories in a couple different ways. One is that you can have people from outside the US who are not members of the church, but for some reason. And always, it's always good to be why but they end up at Graceland going to college. And while they're there, they then convert to the church. And then they return to their home

countries and they become instrumental then in helping to build up the community there. That's one thing that happens. A variation on that is you can also have situations where so for example, in the Dominican, I'm sorry, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there was a situation where someone from that country was teaching at Graceland for some reason. Again, I don't know the backstory there. But he was teaching there and he had a family member back in the DRC, who belonged to an existing Christian community that was independent, but was looking to affiliate with a larger denomination. And so they ended up affiliating with what was then the RLDS church because of this connection that someone had to Graceland. And that's something that often happens in the churches international growth is you'll have existing Christian communities that decide to affiliate en mass with Community of Christ. So that's one way that Graceland shows up another way that Graceland shows up in the story of the International Church is, I don't recall, I don't know if outreach international has a strong Graceland connection. But certainly the health ministries that Sherry Kirkpatrick created, were were based, she was based out of Graceland. And that becomes a really important way in which you have a coordinated international ministry, she goes into other countries, places like Haiti, Africa. And she partners with people there, she trains women in being able to provide certain kinds of health care. And then those local women create institutions that go on functioning after she's left and gone somewhere else, which I think is a really good example of getting away from the center out model. I mean, there's a certain central element there, because she's, you know, the person in the United States with the resources to go to different parts of the world, but she's very self conscious about this needs to be something that is rooted locally, you have to work with local people as partners, they're the ones are going to sustain the program, they're going to keep it going. They make decisions about what to call their program and how to organize it. And that, again, has a really strong bracelet component to it.

Karin Peter 39:00

Wonderful, that was excellent for a question you had no idea was coming. Good job. I want to I want to kind of shift our conversation a little bit into maybe a little bit of a strain of what this means for us. So how am I as we develop a more in depth understanding of the global story of the church? how might that shape and form discipleship in Community of Christ in new ways?

John-Charles Duffy 39:30

I'll admit that I don't have a really concrete sense of that. I mean, certainly, I, you know, I look back at these mandates from Doctrine and Covenants. You know, the call to become a global family, the calls more fully embody our oneness and equality in Christ. And I'm, I'm pursuing this project as a way of trying to help us as a community respond to those mandates, but I don't really know what's going to come out of it. I don't have a very clear defined vision for that I'm producing this documents, which I'm hoping can give us some resources for moving forward in terms of visualizing who we are. I'm also interested in using the book to help us ask maybe hard questions about who we are and the challenges involved in trying to be this kind of multi ethnic, international, multicultural community. What, what challenges are involved in that? And how well are we are not meeting those challenges? But yeah, I don't, I don't know. I don't have a very clear answer to how can this affect our discipleship except to say

that, it seems like God wants us to be God wants us to be an international community. You know, he wants us to be a prophetic people drawn together from the nations that seems important to what God is trying to do with this particular faith community. God wants us to be an example of people trying to be one and to be equal, across those kinds of barriers of nationality and ethnicity and race and culture. I think that's certainly an important part of our mandate to be an ensign of peace for the world. But yeah, I don't really know what's going to look like.

Karin Peter 41:24

So let's make it. Let's move in. Let's zoom in from our Google map to John-Charles Duffy, how has your study into this your preparation for developing this resource, how has that this project of looking at the church as a global family shaped your own discipleship has it had an effect on on you?

John-Charles Duffy 41:48

You know as you ask that question. I confess, I'm feeling a twinge of guilt. I'm feeling like because I because I don't have a ready answer to that. And I'm feeling like maybe I should. Um, I don't know, it's, I guess, a struggle I have and this may be very specific, just to where I am. You know, I'm here in Ohio. So I'm internationally speaking, I'm in the center place. But like at the national level zoomed in, I'm not in the center place. I'm not anywhere near Independence, Missouri. I'm in a tiny congregation. And I don't feel a very strong connection to an international community, except to the extent that I work on this project. And I don't know if that's just kind of maybe that's just an accident of my particular congregation. Maybe that's just the nature of my congregation, maybe we are just, maybe we just happen to be a bit more insular? I don't know if this is. So I don't really have experience with congregations and Community of Christ elsewhere. So I don't know to what extent other congregations may have a stronger sense of their international connection of their belonging to an international body? I don't know. But I will say this, certainly. I remember, my congregation don't have that. And that, again, I think is a problem. You know, if God wants us to be a global family, I feel like, you know, I need to have a stronger sense of what's happening to members of my church family in other parts of the world. And I don't really have a very strong sense of that.

Karin Peter 43:24

Thank you for your frankness on that. John-Charles, I think that reflects where many people are, and perhaps is a challenge for us. When you talk about what are the challenges? Well, that's one of the predominant ones that we can look at in our own lives. At the end of your lecture, you mentioned that you ran out of time, and you were unable to share a portion that had some additional material in there anything from that you want to share with us here. We can be exclusive here at Project Zion. And here's something that the lecture didn't offer.

John-Charles Duffy 43:58

Sure, let me share a couple. Although one of these is not is not exclusive. Unfortunately. It's something I shared afterward at the October lecture after they'd officially shut down. But one of them is, I think, a

really nice story about well, it's a cautionary story about what happens when people at the center, don't listen to people on the margins. And that's the story of the *evanalia*. This is the somewhat famous now gospel ship. So at the end of the 1800s, the, you know, the church now had a well established presence in French Polynesia. And the missionaries there were interested in having a ship, which would make it easier for them to move, you know, through the various islands where people were. And so members of the Church in the US very generously raised money and had a ship built here in the US. And that ship was the *evanalia*, which means the gospel in Indonesian and so the ship then Listen to French Polynesia. And a few years later, it fell apart and sank. And, you know, there are different factors that explain that failure. But one potential factor, at least that stands out to me is that Metuaore, who was the French Polynesian Bishop of the church, wrote a letter to church leaders in the US expressing frustration that instead of hiring Polynesian shipbuilders to create the ship, they had instead, you know, relied on Americans who end up creating a ship which he argued was not well suited for the conditions of French Polynesia. And he says the letter something like, you know, our people know what they're doing. There's a kind of frustration at not being consulted, not being listened to. That's a cautionary tale. For me. That's a cautionary tale of how not interact within the global family. I think what Sherry Kirkpatrick later did in the 20th century, is a much better example of, you know, the white people at the center, not presuming to know the answers. The white people at the center have certain resources, which they make available to people elsewhere, but it's a question of partnering. And, you know, using the gifts and the knowledge and expertise of the various members of that interaction. That's one story I would tell. Yeah, here's a second one, I'd like to tell. One of the things that has stood out to me is I began as I think about, you know, what, what, what stands out when I think about us from the global level, one theme that stands out is war. And this doesn't show up so much if you're thinking about the experience of members in the US, because while Americans have in the 20th century, gone elsewhere to fight in wars, Americans on the mainland have not experienced war on their own soil since the end of the 1800s. But that is not the case for members of committee of Christ living in various other parts of the world. And in the presentation, given October, I had a map with dots in different parts of the world where we have members who have lived through experiences of war. One of the stories I encountered in my research that I'll tell here had to do with members living in Liberia. So in the through most of the 1990s, Liberia was in a state of civil war, a very complex and messy war with multiple parties involved. And at one point, around 1992, things were so bad that a lot of the members of the then RLDS church living in Liberia fled their homes, and the world church lost contact with them. And there's one individual particular man named Richard L. Kuhn, who had been a pastor in Liberia, and who, at some risk to himself, at one point, had gone out in a United Nations vehicle to check on members living in a more remote area. He just disappeared. He fell off of the world church's, radar, and no one knew where he was. And he was presumed to be dead. And then, about a year later, he managed to get a letter sent to Greg McDonald, who was the Bishop of the Africa region, from a refugee camp, where he reginal Kuhn and his family were living. And so the bishop McDonald, along with a pastor of the church from Ivory Coast, Patrice Berrimahe they traveled to this refugee camp, which was a we're talking like a trip of like 12 hours by bus. But they managed to travel out there, they brought some supplies, including medical supplies, which they shared with the camp in general, they were able to help Coons family get their

travel documents, which was a question of just money. And without they were able to finally help the kids get out of the refugee camp. That to me is an encouraging story about the way in which being part of a global family creates connections, international connections, in this case, connections between Liberia and Ivory Coast and the United States that allow people to look out for each other. Those are the kinds of stories that I'm interested in recovering.

Karin Peter 49:35

And the kind of stories that we've listened to that network that cat's cradle.

John-Charles Duffy 49:41

Yes, exactly.

Karin Peter 49:41

So where are you, where are you now and the project John-Charles, what, you've talked about it this 100 page, easy peasy to put together kind of resource. that working for you right now?

John-Charles Duffy 49:55

So I'm hoping that this summer I can advance it. The biggest snag at this point, I think I do. The point where, you know, if I'm disciplined, I can force myself to sit down and pull out the text, I think the text we want to hash out the big challenges is meant to be an illustrated history. And unfortunately, the situation with images just has proved more difficult than I expected. At one point in my research project, I and Katherine Pollock, who was an intern in Nauvoo, in the summer that I was there also working on this project. We went through all the back issues we could of the Herald. And I was particularly interested in looking for photos that I could use. And I found a whole bunch that was really excited about using. And so then I went to Independence, envisioning that, I would find that there was a wonderful archive of all these Herald photos, a kind of catalog and accessible for me, so I could pull them and use them for the book. And that proved not to be the case. So so I was kind of frustrated. And I had to figure out what I do have to work with in terms of in terms of images. But that I think, at this point is the biggest snag to the project coming up with, you know, images that I may end up having to use images that are not great in quality, because I'm having to like, you know, reuse the versions printed somewhere else already, which is not as good as having the original to work with. But I may do that, just because I think they're such wonderful images. I may go ahead and do that, but that's been at this point, I think the fundamental problem is just figuring out what images I have to tell the story not only in words, but also visually.

Karin Peter 51:27

Well, I want to thank you, John-Charles, for the interview today. I'm really looking forward to this resource, and having the two resources together to share with individuals about Community of Christ will be invaluable. The current Illustrated History and then the Global Illustrated History. So before we

close, do you have any last words, any closing thoughts, any great historical wisdom that you'd like to share with us that you've gleaned from this project?

John-Charles Duffy 51:56

I'd like to say this is my final word I this is definitely a first step. And I have to keep emphasizing that because not only because the project so brief, and there will be so much left untold. But also, I'm very conscious of the fact that I am a person in the center. I'm a white man in the United States. presuming to tell the story of the International Church. I can't do that. This is just a first step. I happen to have some intellectual resources and access to some, you know, literal archival resources that allow me to put this first step together. But after that, I'm really hoping that the global family will take up this task of figuring out how to flesh out this story, and how to strengthen this sense of ourselves as an international community doing Christ's work in this world.

Karin Peter 52:47

Thank you so much, again, John-Charles Duffy, for joining us today and your expertise says and historian and author, Professor, a member of Community of Christ. So please, we encourage you to view John-Charles Duffy's lecture on the Autumn Series at historicsitesfoundation.org. And you can see the marvelous photos and slides with the models of the ways that he imagines the story being told. So in the meantime, this is Cuppa Joe, part of the Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karin Peter, thank you so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson 53:38

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