124 | Cuppa Joe | Bryon Adreason
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 to Cuppa Joe here at Project Zion Podcast where we explore the people, places, and events of Restoration History. So pour yourself a cup of coffee and say hello to our guide on these adventures, our Director of Community of Christ Church Historic Sites, Lachlan Mackay.

**Lach Mackay** 00:51

Hello, Karin.

**Karin Peter** 00:53

So it's good to be with you again, now today we have a little bit different of an interview, because we will be visiting with someone from the LDS tradition. It is Bryon Adreasen, who is the curator of the LDS Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. Have you been to this museum?

**Lach Mackay** 01:13

I have been to the museum. I love it. I'd like to spend a lot more time there. But it is just filled with treasures. And I love their exhibits, their interactive nature, and just things that I have read about or seen photos of my entire life. And then actually see the object in person is particularly thrilling for me. I love the way the story comes alive when you see the real thing.

**Karin Peter** 01:42

Well it is a marvelous museum. I had the opportunity to be there once before. Have you met Bryon?

**Lach Mackay** 01:48

I have met Bryon. He's been a longtime friend. He's one of my favorite people that I knew him in his former life when he was with the Lincoln Museum in Springfield, Illinois. And so Bryon is an expert on Abraham Lincoln. And I love his book, *Lincoln and Norman Country*. It's part of the *Looking for Lincoln in Illinois* series. And he explores the complicated relationships between the politicians in Springfield in the 1840s and the Latter-day Saints and all of the numerous connections. And frustratingly, the one connection that can't quite make is, we want to get Joseph Smith Jr. and Abraham Lincoln in the same room. And it's possible he might have been at the same party together, but just possible. And so it's kind of fun to have Bryon help address all these wild stories that circulate about Joseph and Abraham Lincoln. We can get, it seems, Joseph and Mary Todd Lincoln together in a courtroom in what's now the Lincoln-Herndon law office in Springfield. But Bryon has done an amazing job of helping us sort out all these possible connections. I’m a huge fan of his work.

**Karin Peter** 03:07

So. when I was able to visit the museum, and Bryon was kind enough to take us through it on a tour, I noticed that it had that wonderful interactive, user friendly, making-history-exciting-and-accessible feel that was, to me, reminiscent of the Lincoln Museum and Library in Springfield, which I've been to a couple of times. And I mentioned it to Bryon and he did say with kind of a very humble smile, Well, that would be because he worked on that.

**Lach Mackay** 03:45

I love it. Yeah, you can see his fingerprints all over it.

**Karin Peter** 03:48

We can, we can. So, the museum in Salt Lake covers the early years of Mormon history, and we share 14 of those years with LDS tradition. We share more than that in some weird, complicated ways as well, but we officially share those first 14 years. So, what might we discover about this story of what we call Restoration History or story of the church, that would look differently from an LDS telling of it than from a Community of Christ perspective? What might we see in the museum.

**Lach Mackay** 04:27

You know, because the museum is so new, although there probably are some differences, particularly when it comes to succession in Nauvoo, and perhaps the role of plural marriage in that, what really struck me are the things that might look similar. And what really stood out was the movie on Joseph's experience in the sacred grove, what we typically think of now as the First Vision. And so for so long, both churches lifted up the 1838 account of the First Vision, you know, two personages, this is my beloved son hear him. And we use that to convert people. So it wasn't that we were converting people based on any experience *they* had, but we were converting people based on Joseph's conversion experience. Now Community of Christ, long ago we began to move away from that, because of that difficulty. We'd have anti-Mormons come along, or folks not friendly to the church, and share other versions of that conversion experience and it could be devastating to the new member. And so, long ago in Community of Christ, we moved away from that and really would emphasize Joseph's personal conversion, and more often the 1832 account, which is the only one in Joseph’s hand, which seems to be a vision of Jesus. In the LDS tradition in more recent years, because of that very problem, people finding other accounts and being devastated by that, in the LDS church, they have also now began to talk about multiple accounts of the First Vision. And so one of the very first interactive, well it's a film that you can see in the museum kind of blends all those accounts together, and makes it clear that there were multiple accounts to help people process through that in a friendly supportive setting, not an antagonistic setting. It's a beautifully made video, but tragically, I'm particularly sensitive to motion. I get carsick. seasick, really easy. It was so interactive, I couldn't watch it. Too much movement when Joseph’s running through the grove. I had to close my eyes and put my head down to just listen.

**Karin Peter** 06:41

We're learning so much more about you.

**Lach Mackay** 06:43

Yeah, sorry. I know, that's not our purpose here. But it's wonderfully done. And I think it's a nice way to help catch the general membership up and then help them understand the complexities of our story in a loving, caring way. I just think that was really nicely done.

**Karin Peter** 07:00

That we're all learning together, regardless of the shared tradition. So, was there anything you were surprised to see?

**Lach Mackay** 07:13

Probably, if I had not known in advance that the First Vision treatment, that would have been a surprise because that is a shift from where the LDS church has been in the past. Be sure you go upstairs, if these exhibits are still there, I think they are. They have some amazing 19th century paintings of church leaders telling them a story through visuals. I don't know anything about it, but I love it. And so it was just a thrill to see some of the original paintings that I have admired from afar for so long. You'll also see some objects that Community of Christ has loaned to the LDS church.

**Karin Peter**

Yeah, I was gonna ask about that.

**Lach Mackay**

Yeah, some Kirtland Temple, a Kirtland Temple window, as well as, this was actually probably a gift, a fisherman at Haun’s Mill years ago, found a big chunk of metal from the original mill. And tragically, he stole it. He was not connected to either faith, but that eventually made its way into the collection of the LDS church. And we, as the owners of the property, gifted that to the LDS church. So you'll see that Mill Face Wheel, I think it's called, there in the xhibits as well.

**Karin Peter** 08:26

So how did it come about that a window from the Kirtland Temple was gifted to the museum?

**Lach Mackay** 08:30

So that one is not a gift, but a loan on the window, and it predates me, but I'm guessing that there was a new exhibit, previous to the current one being put together, and we had removed from Kirtland Temple in the 19 – I used to know the exact date, I’ve been gone from Kirtland too long - but it's probably the 60s, the original Gothic windows, because they didn't fit very tight anymore, and we put them in storage. And so simply, they were simply sitting in storage. I'm guessing that an inquiry was made at one point from the LDS church, and we were happy to oblige with the loan of one of those original windows. And it's a beautifully mounted exhibit.

**Karin Peter** 09:13

Yes, it is. And Bryon was kind enough to point out to us that that had come courtesy of Community of Christ, which was lovely. Can you give me the name of Bryon's book again, *Lincoln and*

**Lach Mackay** 09:26

*Lincoln and Mormon Country,*

**Karin Peter** 09:28

*Mormon Country*.

**Lach Mackay** 09:30

It's part of *the Looking for Lincoln in Illinois* series from Southern Illinois University Press.

**Karin Peter** 09:36

Ok. I put that in my shopping cart here. Alright, so is there anything else that mentions Community of Christ or came from Community of Christ that we might see as we wander through the museum?

**Lach Mackay** 09:52

I'm guessing that there are some manuscript materials that we might have provided copies of, but I didn't look closely enough on my last visit. But we'll have to do that.

**Karin Peter** 10:04

Yes. Let's check that out when we visit Bryon. Okay. Well, with that, we will get ready to go to the museum. Thanks, Lach.

**Lach Mackay**

 Enjoy.

**Karin Peter** 10:15

Today we are recording at the Latter-day Saint Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. And we are visiting with Dr. Bryon Adreason, who is the museum curator. Bryon has been involved with other museums that you may have heard of, including one of my favorites, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois. So, Bryon, tell us a little bit about yourself recognizing that some people may be familiar with your work, and some may not. So, you are Dr. Adreason and how do you prefer to be addressed?

**Bryon Adreason** 10:50

Bryon is my name and that's what I like to hear. So.

**Karin Peter** 10:55

Okay, we'll go with Bryon but what are your aspects of educational background?

**Bryon Adreason** 11:00

Well, I was born and raised in Logan, Utah, and I went to Utah State University for my undergraduate degree in history and economics. So, I'm an Aggie. Utah State Aggie. Always cheer for the Aggies against the Utes and against the Cougars here in Utah. Coming out of college, I went to Cornell University back in Ithaca, New York and earned a Juris Doctor, or a JD, and I practiced law in a large regional law firm, Harter Secrest and Emery in Rochester, New York, long enough to pay off all of my Ivy League law school debt. I was there a little while. And, you know, there's a lot of good things about being a lawyer, but it didn't really fit my, my personality. And, you know, it was a lot like selling insurance, you have to convince people why they need legal services and why you should be the one to give them services, and then you charge them a lot of money, and it comes out of their pockets. And sometimes that can feel uncomfortable. And well, for a variety of reasons I just didn't like being a lawyer. I loved the law. I liked the intellectual challenge of figuring out legal problems. But the human dimension of being a lawyer was something I just didn't enjoy. I'd have to account for every 10th of an hour of my life to my partners. And so, when I would go to church or was a Scoutmaster or things, I'd have to chalk it up to client development. And you know, that got very tough. So, my wife, recognizing that I was in happy, she volunteered and said, Bryon, you're not the guy married, that law is not for us. Let's do what you really would like to do. You've always loved history. You got a JD because it seemed to be more practical, rather than getting a PhD out of school. But let's go back and do what you really wanted to do. We don't need the rich lifestyle. And so, I really think my wife, because a lot of my colleagues, you know, when I announced I was leaving the firm, came to me privately and said, you know that they felt like they had golden handcuffs and their spouses would not have approved of the step down, not just in economic status, but perceived step down in social standing. And you know that that is the surprising thing, you know, leaving the practice of law, especially at a big law firm in New York, where we were involved with a lot of movers and shakers both politically and business wise in New York, you come to assess yourself value based on those kinds of connections in that kind of world and not on really who you are. And you worry more about money and things like that. And so I just left and never looked back, never regretted having to account for every 10th of an hour to my partners about what I do. So, I went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to get a degree in American history. The reason I went there is that their senior faculty member, Robert Johansen, was one of the deans of Civil War/Jacksonian era history. He was the great biographer of Stephen Douglas. Had done the most important path-breaking work on the culturicity of the Mexican War. Just a delightful, old school, traditional historian, and I worked under him. And I did a dissertation on a religious aspect of the Civil War, American Civil War, that had never been really studied or looked at. And that was a religious dissent in the north against Lincoln and the Republicans and their war policies. Tended to be Democrats who were good Evangelical Christians, that because they were voting the wrong way, their legitimacy as a Christian was questioned. And you had lots of churches during the Civil War in the north splitting on political lines, Democrat and Republican. And many Democrat ministers lost their pulpit because they weren't, on Sunday, propagating a pro-war message. And so that anti-war people, anti-war Democrats, during the Civil War were known as Copperhead, after the poisonous snake. And so, my dissertation was about Copperhead preachers and this Copperhead religious movement that arose in opposition to the mainstream Protestant establishment, which were mostly backers of the Republicans in Lincoln's war. That was a very interesting dissertation,

**Karin Peter** 15:35

A foretaste of our political climate today, Ryan.

**Bryon Adreason** 15:38

Those are your words, Karin. So, as I was finishing, one of the other students under Bob Johansen, Tom Schwartz, the Illinois State historian at the time, they were in the process of creating the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, and somebody with my background was just what they needed to help as they were conceptualizing not just the museum, but how the museum would be carried out into the public, beyond the walls of the museum. So, I was hired out of graduate school, after I got my PhD, to help the President, the state agency that was creating the presidential library, to get into historical tourism, cultural-historical tourism, where it would use historic sites, historic stories, as a way to entice people to come to your locality and tour, learning about history. And so, I was given the assignments of examining all the places around Central Illinois where the Lincoln stories took place and trying to tie localities which today are parking lots or modern buildings and trying to help people imagine what those were like 150 years ago when Abraham Lincoln and his people, his generation of people, were living. So, I pioneered the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Tourism Project, working with a lot of really good people there in Springfield, Illinois, we were able to get Congress to designate an entire swath of counties in Illinois as the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. And so that got me into public history along with the museum just was really a lot.

**Karin Peter** 17:24

It's a marvelous, well, it's a marvelous museum. I have been there a couple of times and enjoyed it each time. You also wrote a book, **Looking for Lincoln in Illinois**. It's in my Amazon book list waiting for Christmas this year.

**Bryon Adreason** 17:42

One of one of the things that I was asked to do was to create some souvenir tourism guidebooks related to themes within the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. And so, I actually did two books in that series. One is **Lincoln in Springfield**, and it's kind of a guidebook for people who go to the presidential library, and the Lincoln home, the Lincoln tomb and those places in downtown Springfield. But it gives them a map and a designation of 50 other locations and stories where important Lincoln things happened. And you can walk around using that little tour book and imagine, you know, what life was like when Lincoln was there. The second book in that series had to do with trying to tie Lincoln stories and Lincoln history with Mormon stories and Mormon history, because Lincoln was a contemporary in the 1830s and 1840s of Mormons who came to Illinois in 1839 and left in 1846. So, there are a lot of interesting ways that people would never guess where Lincoln history intersects with Mormon history. So, the second book, again, as kind of a guidebook that goes from Nauvoo on the west side of the Heritage Area, and across the counties, the same trail, that Joseph Smith and Abraham Lincoln used to travel between Hancock County and the State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. So, there are sections about Springfield, there are sections about Nauvoo, there are sections about broader Hancock County, and there are sections about counties and trails in between those two locations where Lincoln stories and Mormon stories intersected.

**Karin Peter** 19:25

I'm looking forward to reading that particular text.

**Bryon Adreason** 19:27

It’s a lot of fun. Lincoln and Mormon country.

**Karin Peter** 19:30

So, you said that your wife initiated the conversation of you leaving law and going back, doing what you love. I think we owe her a debt of gratitude. Are you okay, sharing her name here on our podcast?

**Bryon Adreason**

Judy.

**Karin Peter**

Judy. So thank you. Thank you for that because we have some wonderful, not only text, but museums that have been a blessing to us because of your decision. Alright, so visiting with you earlier, you grew up in Logan, Utah. You were raised LDS. And so, it made sense you'd have an interest in Mormon history and that. How did you end up here, the curator of the museum here in Salt Lake City?

**Bryon Adreason** 20:11

I got a phone call from the person who was the director of the museum at that time, Kurt Graham. This would have been in late 2012, early 2013, sometime around in there. He called me and said that they were going to do a major renovation of the LDS Church History Museum, and would I be interested in coming out and helping them as they renovated the museum. And I had been at the Presidential Museum in Springfield for almost 15 years and had been doing, had been able to experience most of the things that I had hoped to be able to do there. I had about 10 years in my career. I still had parents and my wife had parents living out in Utah. We had married children with grandchildren living out here in Utah. And I decided, well, if I was ever going to make a change and do something different in the twilight of my career, this would be the time. So, I accepted the offer and came out here and boy, I'll tell you it was it was jumping into the water with a storm going on. They had made some initial decisions, and they were just really starting to get into things. And so I got here just in time: when you're in the museum world, and you're creating exhibits, it's kind of like being a trial lawyer. There's a period of really intense work and long hours and a lot of fun and that's just when I came aboard. They had decided - I should say probably the previous, you know, the Church History Museum here in Salt Lake was opened in 1984. And the original permanent exhibit in the museum, the permanent part of the museum, was that wonderful exhibit called Covenant Restored. And it took LDS history, Mormon history from the beginning up through then, you know, the 1970s, early 1980s. And by the standards of the time, by the museum practices of the time, it was a marvelous thing. But you know, by 2010, 2012, 2013 it was dated. Not necessarily in its message, but in in the way the message was conveyed because museums had evolved in the way that they presented things. And so, people had been used to having the entire Mormon history story presented in the museum. And when I got here, the decision had already been made that the permanent exhibit and the renovation was going to only cover the first 30 years of church history, just the Joseph Smith era up through the end of the Nauvoo period, the building of the Nauvoo Temple, and the exodus of the majority of the saints, and under the 12 apostles out to Utah. It wasn't going to go beyond that in the initial story. And I think there were a couple of reasons for that. One was that the restoration, the story of the restoration up through the Nauvoo period, is a universal story for all people that come from a Mormon tradition. And it's related to Latter-day Saints and LDS church members worldwide, regardless of where they're born, or what their tradition is, because it's the founding story of the faith. And once you get beyond that, it starts to become more regional. And although it's still very important and very, very interesting, if people are willing to study it, it's not as foundationally important. I don't know for sure, but I think that was one element in the decision. And the other was the church history department at the time, was conceptualizing a new written narrative history of the church, and they had conceived of it in kind of four volumes, four stages. The first volume would be the restoration up through the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. The second volume would follow the story of the LDS church, from the exodus from Nauvoo up through the completion of the Salt Lake Temple in the early 1890s. So, it'd be kind of a Utah, Mountain West, Mormon pioneer story. Then volume three would be the church coming into the 20th century. And it would go up through the mid 1950s, under President David O. McKay, and the worldwide scope of the church symbolized by the dedication of the Bern, Switzerland temple in the 1950s. And then the fourth volume would be the contemporary church, which concludes with multiple temples, in small temples across the world. And so that was the conception of the volumes. The first volume of that series will be coming out this year. Others will come in the next couple of years. The church history department had wanted the museum to kind of follow that model. And the idea would be that subsequent exhibits would then follow the narrative path of volumes two, three, and four. So, for all of those reasons, the big renovation that’s in the museum today, called The Heavens are Opened, ends with the 1846 Exodus of Nauvoo. And we thought focusing that way - you need to rein me in.

**Karin Peter** 25:25

No, no. I appreciate this. I'm a little bit of a history geek. So, this is all wonderful information for me. And people do have a fascination with and a love for the founding story, whether they are LDS or Community of Christ to our listeners. So, I appreciate that. I wondered why it was and how that decision was made. So, restoration history, this early period, which is how our new history texts have been written as well, covered a portion of the story. It's connected to what you mentioned earlier, the greater story of United States history and frontier history and pioneer history across the board in the United States. So, in looking at that, what was the process like to determine how the story of the church would be told in the midst of these contextual references and the swirling about of the very complex frontier history of the United States?

**Bryon Adreason** 26:30

Oh, it was, it was hoped from the beginning that we would be able to place the founding story in a more contextual outline. But it gets really tough in public history, in museums in particular. In a book you can provide nuances and provide for deeper context, because the written page allows you to do that. The readers can pick and choose and take their time. When you're doing it at a museum, it has the potential of being overload. So, you have to be careful about how you bring in the context. A really good example of that is the actual beginning of the restoration story, which is the religious context of early 19th century America, the Second Great Awakening. And if you want to put a general audience to sleep quickly, you know, start talking about the theological and the cultural aspects of a religious awakening. That just doesn't resonate with modern audiences, certainly around the world, and even more and more in the United States. People just aren't interested in religious history. So how to grab people and create this kind of Second Great Awakening context without using the verbiage and the intellectual concepts and the jargon that historians and sociologists and other people use is a challenge. And people like me, who come from an academic background, are always not at loggerheads, but in creative tension with graphic designers, and modern writers and people who, although they value the story, they're more interested in how the story is conveyed in a way that will grab an audience.

**Karin Peter** 28:23

You have to keep the integrity of the story, and not lose people, but you'll also want a splash of how people grasp the idea.

**Bryon Adreason** 28:31

So, when you come into the exhibit, we have what we call the Awakening Wall. And you're not going to see the words, Second Great Awakening, you're not going to hear that kind of language or even those kinds of lessons. What you're going to see are very short vignettes and ruminations from real people at the time, who are grappling with the meaning of life, the questions in the culture of the time. Is organized religions still of value? How do you know God? What about, you know, contending theological and religious principles? That seems silly. And so, people are grappling with those kinds of questions, and you're hearing them, you're hearing a teenage Eliza R. Snow. A teenage Orson Pratt. A teenage Peter Cartwright, who's a Methodist minister who never becomes a Mormon. A teenage or a little bit older in his 20’s, Richard Allen, the African American who became very important in the Methodist African church in the 182’s, 1830s. You're meeting all of these people in the early 18 teens, as young people, as teenagers, and they're asking questions to themselves. So, we're demonstrating the awakening. We're seeing individuals confronting the cultural turmoil of the Great Awakening, but we're not burdening people with all of the historical paraphernalia of how historians interpret that. And hopefully people listen to a couple of those, they get the idea, and most importantly, we hope that they might recognize that, wow, you know, questions that were important to people 200 years ago, are still fundamentally, maybe in a little different context and a little different way but are still fundamentally important to people. So, there is an example of the challenge of bringing history, academic history, and melding it with popular public history and how to present it.

**Karin Peter** 30:38

I was watching that wall when I came in this morning, before I went to the front desk, and I think you did a great job, because it does exactly that.

**Bryon Adreason** 30:47

I'll have to confess that it hasn't worked. And one of the main reasons is - I shouldn't be telling these things, this is why people listen, you get to hear the secrets behind everything. When we were designing the building, we had wanted that corridor to be kind of a separate place so that as people entered, they would understand, oh, the exhibit’s beginning. This is actually the first part of the exhibit. And at the end of the exhibit, we have actual notes from a sermon given by Jesse Townsend, the Presbyterian minister in Palmyra that Joseph Smith's mother and brothers probably actually heard in October of 1819. But the way it ends up, like today you were sitting in the lobby waiting for me to come, and people just see that Awakening Wall not as part of the exhibit. You know, they think maybe it's kind of an advertisement. They don't understand that that's really where the exhibit begins. So, people stopping for 30 seconds or 40 seconds and pondering that message and being able to make the connection to the next part of the museum hasn't worked as well as I had hoped.

**Karin Peter** 31:59

So, a neon arrow start here might be a solution to that.

**Bryon Andreason** 32:05

Those are problems that, you know, when you do a museum. One of the things that they got right in Springfield, the Presidential Museum, is that they designed all of the stories and all the exhibits’ basic patterns before they designed the building. So, then the architects that created the building built around the storyline. But here, we had an existing physical space, you know, with walls where they're at. And, you know, we had to accommodate the story to the physical space. We had it backwards. And this was a casualty of that problem. We had to have a lobby, we had to have an open place. We didn't have room for the awakening. We could not throw the awakening out, we had to have something. So, it ended up being perceived by visitors as part of the lobby when we were hoping that wouldn't be the perception.

**Karin Peter** 32:58

So, for all our listeners, when they come to visit the museum here in Salt Lake, take note that the wall with the vignettes is the beginning of the story. So, when you were making the decisions on what to include and what not to include, was there anything that came under debate? Was there anything that some people really wanted to include and others didn't? That there was uncertainty,

**Bryon Adreason** 33:20

I think there was a broad, basic consensus that we wanted to tackle topics in church history that in the last 20 - 30 years had kind of been forgotten or neglected. Things like the seer stone. Things like plural marriage. Plural marriage has always been associated with Mormonism, but probably more in the pioneer period in Utah, not necessarily the restoration period and Kirtland, and certainly Nauvoo. We wanted to talk about the political sociodynamics that lay behind a lot of the persecution that early church members faced. You know, things like that, that people didn't necessarily receive in church history sites or church curriculum. As, I'd say, venerating it for the last 20 - 30 years. No, I think it's really interesting. I was a child in the 1960s, born in the late 1950s. And the LDS church really didn't explode internationally. I mean, it always had an international dimension. But the membership didn't totally start to change until the mid to late ‘70s, early 1980s. So, in the ‘60s when I was a child growing up, most Latter-day Saints were generally aware of polygamy. They were aware of the cultural tensions in Nauvoo and in Missouri. They had a greater awareness of restoration history because, I guess maybe we were closer to it. We had ancestors that were part of that story. Most of us, many of us were from polygamous families at some point back, a couple of generations earlier, and we just seemed to meet be more generally aware. But those kinds of assumptions, that people understood that background of their church, can't be made today. You know, people born since the 1980s, when curriculums kind of took for granted that there was this kind of base knowledge of church history. And that assumption was the wrong assumption to make because there was amnesia from the 1980s up through the 2000s. And many people join the church without knowing about seer stones, without knowing about polygamy, without knowing about that theocracy and those kinds of tensions. And I think it ambushed a lot of older people, my generation and older, to realize that you had all of these Latter-day Saints growing up without that foundational knowledge that you assumed, and now they're learning later in life, and they feel ambushed. So, bringing those stories back, you know, into the history of the church was very important for people younger than me.

**Karin Peter** 36:12

Bringing it back into the dialogue of identity. Community of Christ has worked to do the same thing to make sure that we understand a broader perspective of our history.

**Bryon Adreason** 36:23

I think that's an interesting point. Because in the 1960s, I knew about the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I knew about Joseph Smith III and Emma having broken from Brigham Young. I knew about this tradition. Sadly, some of us think because we were competitors. I mean, there wasn't a lot of love lost in the early part of the 20th century between the two traditions. Then in the 1960s, you get this thawing, this ending of the cold war, at least among the intellectuals and among church leaders.

**Karin Peter** 37:02

And I think among the history departments. They kind of lead that, were in the forefront.

**Bryon Adreason** 37:07

Right. So afterward, you know, where the LDS and the RLDS aren't necessarily seeing themselves as enemies with each other, at least on the LDS side, that kind of awareness of the RLDS tradition disappears, you know. It's another example of this kind of historical amnesia. And, you know, one of the things we felt strongly about in the museum exhibit is we had to recapture that understanding for LDS members, that there are multiple traditions that came out of the restoration. That had once been known in my generation, and it had been kind of forgotten in subsequent generations. So, in the museum here, you know, when we get to the to the 1840s and the Nauvoo period, you know, it was very important that we help our primary audience, LDS church members, rediscover the dysphoria of different LDS traditions. Any informed Christian needs to, regardless of what their denomination or brand of Christianity is, they need to understand on some basic level the divisions within Christianity. The same would be true of any Muslim, you know, they need to understand the division between Sunni and Shiite or whatever the evolution of their religious tradition. Same with the Jews. Well, same with Latter-day Saints. So, for example, we put on a nice map that shows the different kind of geographical locations and put up a few faces, because it's always important to tie a concept with a person and a face and a name when it comes to public history. And to show Latter-day Saints today that we're not the only ones. You know, Emma didn't come west, she stayed with her son. And the other big group of LDS tradition, which is now the Community of Christ, was based in the Midwest and they're still very much a part of the religious scene. And there were others too, and they weren't quite as successful over time as the other two traditions. You should know about Lyman Wight. You should know about Sidney Rigdon back in Pennsylvania. You should know about Strang and the Strangites. There's an example of one aspect of church history that had kind of been lost over 30-40 years that we wanted to bring back and make Latter-day Saints more aware of again.

**Karin Peter** 39:35

The bigger picture of this whole tradition. When we went through the museum last time I was here, you also pointed out, in the Kirtland exhibit, a window that's there. Tell us a little bit about that.

**Bryon Adreason** 39:47

Yeah, that goes back to the ‘60s when I was a child and so this is all second hand. And I wish, this is where we really need Lach with us because he would know all about this. Back in the ‘60s, I guess there was a renovation Community of Christ, then the RLDS church, made with the Kirtland Temple and they, they needed to take the old original windows out for climate control and preservation. And the Community well the Community of Christ, the Reorganized Church, which it was that time, were gracious enough to make available to the Salt Lake church, some of the original windows that Brigham Young and others had actually worked on. And they have been, you know, out here in Salt Lake since the 1960s. And the renovation gave us a wonderful opportunity to really showcase one of the original Kirtland Temple windows in a facade where we tell the story of the Kirtland Temple. And we have the Reorganized Church, the Community of Christ, to thank for making that available for us out here in Utah.

**Karin Peter** 40:53

There are other pieces of the story, artifacts, photos, that kind of thing, from Community of Christ that you would have liked to include.

**Bryon Adreason** 41:04

I'd like all of the seer stones that they’ve got from the Whitmer family. Anything, anything.

**Karin Peter** 41:11

Yeah, fair enough. Absolutely.

**Bryon Adreason** 41:13

But you know, we've been grateful to people like Lach, to people like Ron Romig, and to people before them, who are such wonderful custodians of our shared heritage. And, you know, we really see that collaborative partnership and hope it will continue. And, you know, a lot of those things, they should be seen in Kirtland, they should be seen in Independence, they should be seen in those places where the Community of Christ have preserved them. And that's where we should go see them. And so, I guess I'll tactfully say that, no, I'm not going to covet.

**Karin Peter** 41:52

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s seer stone. Absolutely. Have you been to the temple in Independence of Community of Christ?

**Bryon Adreason** 42:02

I have. And again, the openness of the archives to research is very, very welcome. and Ron and Lach made available - I was able to look at the Whitmer family seer stones. They brought them out. I was able to see them. They've always been very gracious. And it’s a wonderful place to do research. And the temple itself. I can remember going there, not long after it was actually constructed, and having a formal tour and having the explanation of the nautilus shell and the worldwide outreach of the Community of Christ ministry. It was a nice educational experience for me. I would have been, it would have been back when I was in law, a lawyer. So that was - I learned a lot, you know, from that visit and subsequent.

**Karin Peter** 42:51

And we've made some additions and renovations. So the next time you're in town.

**Bryon Adreason**

I hope to be there in September.

**Karin Peter**

Come and see and walk the labyrinth that's now on the rooftop of the building. So we talked earlier, or mentioned, that the history departments, LDS history department and Community of Christ, formerly RLDS history department, have been in this kind of continued dialogue and, what I would deem, a productive relationship, for several decades now. What do you hope can be accomplished by interaction in the area of church history?

**Bryon Adreason** 43:27

Sharing of resources, sharing of - everybody benefits by a better understanding of other people. So I would hope to see more of the same and no regression and just respect and mutual cooperation going forward as it has been.

**Karin Peter** 43:46

Broaden where we have been talking to, because we share a founding a narrative. And because we have been cooperating in this way, we learn about our shared story about the nature of community.

**Bryon Adreason** 44:02

Great question. The quest for utopia, the quest to create a Zion community, a Zion world, a Zion city, a Zion church, is very hard and fraught with difficulties and is unattainable in this mortality. But I think the LDS tradition, you know, being founded in the quest to create Zion, and to prepare for the Second Coming and to create a society worthy and ready to accept the Savior and to help in that ministry, sets all of us up with a kind of goal or lofty aim that is unattainable. Which is going to create frustrations, and yet is necessary. And the goal always needs to be sustained. And I think both of our traditions, which originated in that shared tradition, and the Community of Christ and the LDS church continue to this day, in their way, to try to duplicate, to replicate, this creation of Zion. And with all of its frustrations with all of the fraught difficulties that come with it. And sharing those experiences and understanding different perspectives, it's a noble goal, and we should continue to do it, and we're getting ever closer and the world's a better place for it. But we can take heart as we look at each other's experiences that even when failures come, even when we don't reach our ideals, it need not be something that deflates us, or makes us turn away from the desire and the goal to create a Zion world. And I just think, being aware, an LDS person like me, being aware of the challenges and the experiences that the Community of Christ has experienced in that way, helps me to put a better perspective on my own personal and my church's experiences. And I think, vice versa, that the Community of Christ people can learn and take heart from the successes and the failures on the LDS. So you know, we're both trying to create Zion. And it's hard.

**Karin Peter** 46:22

It is. We talked about that before we began recording about, about that experience. So, before we close our conversation, I just wanted to ask you, did we miss anything? Is there anything you'd like to share about the museum or about visiting the museum?

**Bryon Adreason** 46:42

No. I hope that people from the Community of Christ tradition would feel welcomed, that they'll recognize a lot of the story, and that even though the interpretation of the story will be different in many aspects from the Community of Christ tradition, that they'll still come away with a positive feeling and an understanding of their western LDS Brighamite cousin. I hope we've created an exhibit that allows for that kind of takeaway for that particular group and community.

**Karin Peter** 47:17

Well I know my experience in touring the museum was a positive experience. And as you say, we have different perspectives on the story, but we do share it as part of our common understanding. And because of that, I want to thank you, Bryon, or Dr. Adreason, for being willing to visit with us here on Project Zion. This is a wonderful place to visit and I want to, again, encourage our listeners, if you are in Salt Lake City, take some time to visit the museum, as Bryon has taken time out of his busy summer schedule to visit with us today. So there is a scripture that I will paraphrase since I don't have my Community of Christ *Doctrine and Covenants* handy, but I do believe it was Wallace B. Smith, who was then the Prophet president of the RLDS church, who said that Zion is as near or as far away as the spiritual condition of my people and I think we experienced it here today. So, thank you.

**Bryon Adreason** 48:24

Thank you, Karin.

**Josh Mangelson** 48:33

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast, subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you're there, give us a five star rating. Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries, or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze