

Cuppa Joe|Historic Sites

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

historic sites, church, Kirtland, community, Kirtland temple, history, Christ, story, Emma Smith

SPEAKERS

Carla Long, Josh Mangelson, Lach Mackay, Barbara Walden

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.

Carla Long 00:28

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long and today you are in for such a treat today. I'm here with two very good friends Apostle Lachlan Mackay, and Barb Walden. And they work at our historic sites, and they're going to talk a lot about our historic sites, and you're just going to get just a flood of information. And I'm gonna let them take it away. But first, I want to say hi, Lach and Hi, Barb. Hi, Carla.

Lach Mackay 00:59

Hello, Carla.

Carla Long 01:00

It's so good to have you here. I'm really looking forward to learning a lot more about what you have to say. Because every single time I listened to either one of you, I just walk away thinking I'm the smartest person on the planet, because I've learned so much. So we're just gonna jump right into it. Barb, why don't you go first, why don't you tell us a little bit about your background and how you ended up doing what you're now doing.

Barbara Walden 01:22

I serve as the Executive Director for the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation. And my background is I went to school to learn how to be a curator went to Graceland University and majored in history. That's where I received my history degree and then went on to the Cooperstown graduate program, to get a master's in museum studies where I learned all about preserving historic artifacts and the importance of interpretation and museum management. And so that's the educational background. But for the personal background growing up in Community of Christ, you can't dodge church history by

any means. And my father was an avid church enthusiast. So I grew up hearing the stories, Oliver Cowdery and Emma Smith and Joseph Smith. But I think in my mind, they were more fictional characters. Nothing that really related to me personally. It wasn't until I was wrapping up my freshman year at Graceland wondering what I was going to do for the summer that I ran across a flyer that was posted there on campus that talked about summer internships at the Joseph Smith Historic Site. And so the idea of heading off on my own, having a Life on the Mississippi River there and Nauvoo that Mark Twain life was very appealing. And it was more of the freedom of a young adult, not wanting to go home during the summer, but wanting to be somewhere else, you know, outside of my siblings' watchful eye and my parents' watchful eye. So I think it was that freedom that drove me to the Joseph Smith Historic Site for the summer internship. But I met Alma Blair, who was the summer instructor for the interns. And what I didn't realize was that was going to be a life changing summer, he had a way of taking church history and giving it a breath and having it come alive. And I think for me, being in that place of history, reading a biography of Emma Smith and walking out my front door to see three of the homes that she lived in where she raised her children, and also her final resting place, she became very much alive and real to me, and church history became more relevant than ever. And while you're there serving as a summer intern, you're also giving tours. So you're meeting people from all over the world. And you're fielding questions not only on church history and identifying artifacts, but you're also feeling questions on the Community of Christ today. And I was getting questions that I had just not received in the congregation, you know, questions like believing in women in the priesthood. Why do you have women in the priesthood? Those kinds of questions. Questions like Grant MacMurray had just become our new church president? And folks asking why he wasn't a Smith descendant and having to explain that tradition and some of the essential Community of Christ beliefs, fielding questions about that. And I think by the end of the summer, I was not only excited about church history, I was real passionate about the Community of Christ today, because it seemed alive and very much relevant. The mission of the church seemed very much relevant in my own life. And I remember my last purchase in the museum store was a Community of Christ keychain, which was an RLDS keychain, with the church seal, because I just felt so proud of the church, having represented it all summer long and fielding these questions that now I had answers to, to our beliefs and principles. So that's how I kind of stumbled upon the historic sites. And after that summer, spent a summer in Kirtland, Ohio and there history really came alive for me, and I still feel a sense of WOW, when I'm inside the Kirtland Temple, seeing the ministry of the Historic Sites as sacred places, and not just historic places is really powerful. And Lach was the site director at the time. And he certainly made history an exciting pursuit, and study. And I just knew after summer in Kirtland, being involved in the Community of Christ Historic Sites was definitely something I wanted to invest my life in. So a long answer to a short question.

Carla Long 05:22

No, that was a great answer. And, Barb, it's so interesting that you said all of that, because I'm older than you. But I had a very similar experience when I was a temple tour guide at our Temple in independence. And all those questions that came at me, I realized in the answer of those that we're awesome, and we're super cool, and what we offer the world is something really, really important. And I learned so much by answering those questions that I had never really heard before, or ever really had to think about before, because I was just a Community Christ girl, you know, or RLDS girl at the time, that stuff didn't really matter to me until it did. And it was just fascinating to talk to other people about it and learn the answers to those questions and then be able to say the answers to those questions.

Absolutely. I mean, oftentimes the answer, well, this is what we've always done. And so that tour guide experience made me realize that the why to why we've always done this. It's also a humbling experience, because I realized how much of Community of Christ I was taking for granted. So true. And as always, you say it way better than I do. But I agree with you I completely agree with you. Lach, what about you what brought you to this place?

Lach Mackay 06:27

My story is quite different from Barb's I grew up in eastern Jackson County, Missouri. Grew up going to Smith family reunions in Nauvoo and visiting Lamoni and places like that regularly. But I gotta say I was never really captured by the story. Went off to University of Missouri, got Russian Studies and Economics degrees Thought I was going to work for the government and it was a really long interview process and I needed to kill time. So I signed up for the museum management program through Graceland was recruited by David Ettinger, then the RTF (Restoration Trails Foundation) executive director. And before coming to Nauvoo for the summer, I thought I'd learned a little more about this story. So I picked up Robert Bruce Flanders, Nauvoo Kingdom on the Mississippi started reading. And I just was captured by what I discovered. And I loved my time in Nauvoo with Alma Blair, was invited to go to Kirtland a second summer, it was really there that I think although I was baptized at 10. I think I was, in some ways converted at maybe 23 or 24, as I spent time in Kirtland Temple. And so it was the history that really brought me into the current church, which I know it doesn't work that way for a lot of people. I've never had to unlearn difficult stuff. So the history wasn't challenging for me, it was just a great story of regular people capable of great stuff and awful stuff. And so I ended up being hired to go to Kirtland. So my timing was great first as an intern, but then asked to stay as the first full time site director that we'd had for decades, and then eventually ended up being asked to manage all of Community of Christ Historic Sites. So I was in Kirtland 15 years, then moved to Nauvoo in 2007 and been here ever since.

Carla Long 08:16

Oh, wow. It does seem like it just has a way of grabbing you and not letting you go, which is very fun. And maybe that will happen to someone listening to this podcast, who knows? Maybe someone else will be grabbed in a polite way. Easy questions to field for you two, but maybe something our listeners do not know. How many historic sites does Community of Christ own and where and what are they?

Lach Mackay 08:39

So our officially designated sites include Kirtland Temple in Kirtland, Ohio, the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois, which is really Joseph and Emma Smith's Nauvoo, the properties that they owned and lived in. The Plano Stone Church in Plano, Illinois, and understood to be the first church of the Reorganization. Joseph Smith, III's Liberty Hall in Lamoni, Iowa, and finally, Heritage Plaza in Independence, Missouri, it's just next to the Stone Church that is composed of the Frederick Madison Smith Study, a little brick cabin, and the Jones Flournoy home, which is another little brick cabin. Flournoy is the guy that sold the church the 63 acre Temple Lot. So those are our current historic sites. That's more than I was anticipating, I don't know why I only anticipated two. But that's really cool that there's more than that, and lots more that people can visit. So how did Community of Christ acquire those historic sites. So it depends. Kirtland is really...Joseph III turned possession over to his church in 1878. But it's really adverse possession there. It's long and complex, but we possessed, proclaimed to

the world it was ours, maintained for 21 years. And so our cloudy ownership became clearer, as early as 1881 or as late as 1901, depending on how conservative the attorney is. Encourage people interested to have a look at Kim Loving's article in the Mormon History Association Journal on Kirtland Temple ownership, that one's probably the most complex. Others like in Nauvoo, we purchase from the Smith family in the early 20th century, or created a buffer around those sites by acquiring other properties through the first half even or maybe even a little later of the 20th century. Plano Stone Church was a congregational building, but they wanted to put an addition on basically a fellowship hall. We didn't want to negatively impact the historical integrity of the structure. So we bought the Plano Stone Church from the congregation. Even though world church owns all properties, we basically gave them enough money that they could build a separate but right next door fellowship hall called Rogers Hall. So that's kind of a funny one. We would have purchased Liberty Hall. And then we purchased the FM Smith Study from the Edward and Lois Smith Larson family, it was out in eastern Jackson County, near the James Bridger junior high school Holke in Speck roads, and that was moved next to the auditorium. And it was moved again later. And then the same is true with the Jones Flournoy House, purchased it, and it was moved several times to its current location there at Heritage Plaza.

Carla Long 11:28

Oh, wow. Okay, so that's a lot of great explanation. Thank you for that Lach. Barb, you have anything to add?

Barbara Walden 11:34

I don't.

Carla Long 11:34

Lach fantastic. You got the seal of approval from Barb. That's stuff means a lot right there, actually. So there's been a couple of different foundations and groups that work on the historic sites, there's been the Restoration Trails Foundation, and Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation. Can we talk a little bit about maybe how those were founded, where those are at now what their mission is? Just tell me all about those two different groups? Absolutely. I'm so glad you asked, because you're not the only one who's a little confused about RTF and the Historic Sites Foundation and what the role is with the historic sites. So I'm more than happy to talk about that. The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation was founded way back in 1970, about 50 years ago, however, it was known at the time as the Restoration Trail Foundation. So 1970 Restoration Trail Foundation, or RTF, was started. In 2007, the name of the Restoration Trail Foundation became Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, so that the same organization. We just changed our name in 2007. Community of Christ has a long tradition of changing the name of the faith community. So I suppose the Historic Sites Foundation would continue that tradition in 2007. The mission of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation is to support preserving and sharing Community of Christ Historic Sites with present and future generations. That's our official mission statement. But you'll often hear our board members say that our mission is to preserve and share church heritage, we have an emphasis on preserving and maintaining historic sites. But we're also looking at creating educational resources that expand church history outside of those five significant historic sites that the church manages. So the foundation is a not for profit organization that was incorporated in the state of Missouri, and were managed by a board of directors that includes 15 Very talented and skilled individuals who are passionate about church history.

But they also come to the table with a diversity of experiences, and lots of knowledge in a wide variety of fields like law, museum management, architecture, adult education and nonprofits. So when you come to the board meetings, you always walk away knowing something more, not just about church history, but about a variety of different fields. And I find that these board members, even though they come from different experiences, and perspectives, they all seem to agree on the importance of raising awareness of Community of Christ, historic sites and church history in general. That's very cool and very helpful to talk about the differences and yet the similarity between those two organizations, those two structures, I will say I was born in the late 70s. And when you said the 70s were 50 years ago, it did kind of shocked me. Oh, no, it was 50 years ago. Dang it. I'm sure working in historic sites, you were both always aware of dates. And so I'm sure that would never shock you. It would never surprise you. We're also well experienced in forgetting dates, and some of the details too. Oh, well, that makes me feel a little bit better. What is the relationship between Historic Sites and the Historic Sites Foundation? How do those two interconnect? Good question the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation is an affiliate of the Community of Christ. So right off the bat, I am not Lachlan's boss, as much as I would love to be his boss I'm not, we kind of run in a parallel line. So the Historic Sites Foundation is here to support the Community of Christ Historic Sites. We don't manage them. We don't supervise the staff. We leave that in Lach's hands. And he manages that Community of Christ Historic Site staff and volunteers. He oversees their budget. The Historic Sites Foundation is here to support him. So we can do that through funding grants and supporting the Alma Blair internship program. It's ensuring that people are aware of the historic sites and visiting the historic sites. We're here to promote volunteer opportunities and educational resources that will hopefully drive people to the historic sites. So it's not just financially helping fund the historic sites. For example, we gave nearly \$300,000 to the Historic Sites last year for various maintenance, preservation and education projects. So we recognize the importance of financially supporting the Community of Christ Historic Sites, but we're also here to support them in volunteer recruitment, summer internship recruitment, and other ways that really helps raise the value of the importance of Community of Christ Historic Sites. Wow, that's a lot. Lach.

Lach Mackay 16:25

I'll just add that Barb's right on that. But from 1986, to 1998, the church asked the Foundation to, in addition to all those things, also take on the management of the Sites. So for that period of time, they did run the site. And that has caused all kinds of confusion. So people regularly reach out to Barb about things that they need to talk to me about. And sometimes it's the other way around, as well. But the Foundation raises funds, and awareness, and creates educational resources that the church owns, maintains, manages, maintains with significant financial support from the Foundation.

Carla Long 17:06

That is a little bit confusing, and I'm sure, in Community of Christ, we just kind of like have just the one person in our minds like, I definitely have to go that person and we just never remember that it might actually change, it might actually be different. That's, that's kind of the way I am too. So I have a little bit of sympathy for those people who do that. And I have a lot of sympathy for both of you, who have to continually field questions and be like, "Well, that's not really me. That's somebody else." I get that. I'm just glad they're asking. We're not being ignored. And that's a good thing. That is a good thing. You're right. So how do the Historic Sites and the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation relate to church history and the Sacred Story Team?

Lach Mackay 17:48

So this is also a little confusing. In addition to Historic Sites and the Historic Sites Foundation, there is a Church History and Sacred Story Team, which I'm currently the lead of. And we are primarily focused at the moment on oral histories. Megan Edvalson is our oral history specialist. And she is supported in significant ways financially through the Historic Sites Foundation and fundraising that they have done. So we're trying to catch up on oral histories of general officers and others that haven't happened for a number of years. But they're also tasked with things like making sure the First Presidency is aware of current events in the church history world. There are church history team members working on an international history of Community of Christ. So in a number of cases, Historic Sites, staff are supporters of the Church History Team. But in other cases, like Barb is one of our three world church historians, though the Executive Director of the Foundation. But also one of our volunteer World Church Historians, along with Rod Romig and David Howlett. So there's a lot of crossover, but they are separate yet again.

Carla Long 19:02

And if I can add to that we work marvelously together. Because many of us are teaming up in various capacity on other teams and projects, dealing with church history. So like Lach said, you have these different teams, but a lot of times it's the same players on the different teams. So whether we're creating educational resources together or serving as an instructor for the summer interns, or helping with the Oral History Program, our board members and staff are pretty active in a variety of ways outside of the Foundation, and this really helps raise awareness about the value of history throughout Community of Christ. Well, I actually had never even heard of the Sacred Story Teams, maybe I'm way behind, or maybe I'm a normal church member, I don't know. But I hadn't even heard that that was a separate entity as well. So maybe something new for our listeners as well that they can listen to and see about. That was excellent. Thank you so much. How have you found church history and Historic Sites helpful in today's Community of Christ?

Lach Mackay 20:00

I'll jump in first. I have found it extraordinarily helpful, not just personally but for the organization. Because by understanding our past, we can better equip members to process change today. And to understand what's happening today. I've said repeatedly that if I was going to go out and try and write an origin story to support current Community of Christ mission, I don't think I could write a better one than the one that we have inherited. So our struggles with violence, and how that motivates us to pursue peace, our struggles with poverty, and how that makes us especially thoughtful about the needs of the hungry in the world today. You know, right now we're spending a lot of time talking about race, the things that we did well, and the many areas that we failed, and how can that help us move into the future, just again, and again, and again, I find our past extraordinarily helpful. As we try and move into the future. I spend a lot of time lately on Fred Smith and Israel A. Smith. And it's just kind of stunning to me how similar the financial crisis was under Fred M. in the 20s, and 30s, to some of the struggles we've had over the last 10 or 12 years. And in a number of cases, the causes are very similar, which tells me that we either didn't learn the lessons, or we forgot them, and managed to make some of the same mistakes. And some of the solutions, I think, have turned out to be similar as well. So Fred M. called as a member of his first presidency, to the presiding bishop for at a time during that crisis, to

make sure there was strong communication between the bishopric and the First Presidency. And of course, that's exactly what Steve Veazey did as well with Stassi. So I just find it extraordinarily helpful in navigating the world today. But it's also clear to me that not just as a church, but as a culture in the US anyway, we have never learned or (have) forgotten how to think historically. So I think that we are failing to equip our members to understand how the historical process works. And as a result, they're really susceptible to falling for the latest story that they read on the internet. They're vulnerable to being tricked or misled. So we need to step up our game there.

Carla Long 22:22

And I think the question, how have you found church history in the Historic Sites helpful in today's church, I think about how Locke and his staff are really good at drawing the connections between the past and the present. And at the Community of Christ Historic Sites. These are, in many ways, safe spaces where people can ask the difficult questions where they can have those difficult conversations, where they may not feel like they can have that conversation, whether it's in our congregations or reunion grounds, it seems like at the Historic Sites, as we're sharing stories, we create this safe space where people feel like they can be vulnerable in connecting to the people of the past, as they're trying to understand the people of the present. When you read the stories of the issues of people of the past I think in some ways, it makes you feel more human, in drawing that connection, giving yourself more grace. But also giving that safe space to have those conversations. And thinking about what Lach just said, over time, I've come to learn that historians may handle church crises the best. And it's not because we are some kind of super heroes, because we're certainly not but because we've grown to see throughout church history that our faith community has taken some serious hits, and we have miraculously persevered. So I think about the financial concerns felt throughout the church a decade ago. And I found that history minded people can easily look back to the 1830s and say you want to see a financial crisis. Let me tell you a little story about Kirtland, Ohio 1837, and the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti Banking Company. Or let me take you to the 1880s when the RLDS church was really hurting financially, and had to make that difficult decision to cancel the tradition of two conferences a year, because we couldn't afford two conferences a year. So that challenging time gave birth to one of our most treasured traditions of the summer reunions, the family camp gatherings that take place all over the world. It's something that we treasure. So I found that historians have a wide and timeless perspective of today's church in some ways. And perhaps it's a view of our historical DNA and the optimism that we've seen tough times before. And we're going to come out of this crisis even stronger because we've seen that happen again and again. So I think church history shows us that when Community of Christ has its back up against the wall, when we are down, we not only are able to get up and dust ourselves off. We experience this birth of new possibilities and expanded ministries in ways that we could never have imagined before facing those challenges.

Lach Mackay 25:08

That bank failure talk is hitting a little close to home this week, Barb.

Carla Long 25:14

Oh, that was a rousing sermon, Barb, oh my gosh, it made me want to stand up and cheer. That was beautiful. Thank you so much for saying that. It's beautiful. I mean, it really gives new life to the saying, you know, those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it, or they should be excited to

repeat it. Because maybe good things can come out of it again, even though it's hard. So I know that you've done some educational stuff from the Historic Sites Foundation, what kind of educational programming are you doing for people right now, or that you've done in the past that they can continue to watch. There's programs that the Foundation is creating. But there's also wonderful things that are happening at the Historic Sites, as well. So I can talk a little bit about what we're doing at the Historic Sites Foundation, and then I hope Lok can talk about what people are experiencing when they arrive at Community of Christ Historic Sites, and some of the programs that are taking place there. So I think one of our most popular educational programs really started during the COVID pandemic. And that's our online lecture series, we have a spring and fall lecture series, where we explore a wide variety of topics in church history. And we're really blessed that there are talented historians out there willing to share their knowledge with us. So it's been a wide variety of topics. And all of these lectures are available online, on our YouTube site, or on our website, historic sites, foundation.org. You can find all of these lectures. One of the programs that I was really excited about was the fall series in 2021. And 2022, was called Church History Without Boundaries, where we heard from storytellers all over the world talking about the beginning of Community of Christ in a variety of countries. And so by going on our website, you can hear lectures about the Community of Christ story in Germany, and Italy, Australia, England, and Wales, just all over the world. And that has been fascinating to learn more about our sacred story. We are also involved in creating educational resources for youth. So we have a Children in Church History booklet that share stories of youth in Community of Christ history. And we're also creating some lesson plans to go along with those stories that we should have available by World Conference. Our website has online puzzles, and activity sheets, and all sorts of things. We also create resources for Heritage Day. And we have church members that often say I want to incorporate more church history into the congregational experience. So we have hymn festivals that are available, we have stories that connect to the mission initiatives and the enduring principles. We also have lesson plans that look at the life and legacy of Joseph Smith III, and Emma Smith. Some of the board members and myself serve as guest ministers that go out to reunions and retreats. We have storyteller nights where we get together with talented storytellers. And we pick a theme and share stories, and invite members of the congregation to share their stories as well. And lastly, we have an online exhibit called We Are All Storytellers, where we have over 50 individuals who have recorded themselves in video sharing some of their favorite stories in church history. And that was an exhibit that began during COVID. When we were all trapped in our houses. It was a way to share church history. But it is evolved. And we continue to add more storytellers to that online exhibit. And I have to say Community of Christ is filled with great storytellers. We're really blessed with that. And the last thing I'll add is we have an annual Bus Tour, where Peter Smith and I, and 50 of our new friends travel to the Community of Christ Historic Sites, to share church history, and we have a theme every year. So this year, it's Women in Community of Christ History. It's going to be an estrogen inspiring tour. And there's three seats left. So anybody who wants to join us in October, we're happy to have you. But we'll travel to the Community of Christ Sites and hear stories about women in church history. We'll also see some of the historic sites of women in United States history. But just like our lectures in church history, without boundaries, our bus tours also continue overseas as we've had tours of England and Wales, we went to the Holy Land a few years ago to explore church history there. So it really seems like church history has no limits. And we try to create educational programs that highlight the importance of not only the people in the past, but the significance that your story is church history. That the lives that we have

today—you Carla—our story is church history and we value them wow, that's a lot. Barb, you have been super, super busy, you all have been super busy. Lach, do you have anything to add?

Lach Mackay 30:06

Just a little bit of about what's happening at the sites, in addition to in person historical interpretation or tours, which we are just opening up again for the season. The pandemic taught us that we need to get much better at sharing online. And so we experimented with live zoom-based tours, and still do those on occasion for folks around the world. But we also are doing (one of those virtual) tours, just finished up one in Nauvoo, which will make available soon. And we'll soon be doing one for Kirtland. We also have available using the technology for touring online real estate. So you might be interested in a home and you use this platform to walk through the home without being there. Using that technology, courtesy of a generous doner, we have filmed Kirtland Temple, the Nauvoo sites, Liberty Hall, even the Independence Temple. And so we don't have all those available yet. But soon, you'll be able to walk through those spaces from the comfort of your living room. And for those interested, they can schedule with us to have a narrated version. So, I for example, can join you and walk you through the space while we're both in the comfort of our living rooms, or library in my case. So we're pretty excited that the cost of getting here which we know is a barrier for most of our members is no longer going to be a barrier if they have a cell phone, and Wi Fi or cellular connection. All of that sounds so exciting, like so exciting in so many ways that people can interact with Historic Sites and Historic Sites Foundation, even from the comfort of their own home, or jump on that bus tour, three spots left, friends, three spots left.

Carla Long 31:53

Also, if I can add and maybe brag about Lach and his staff a little bit more. The hospitality shown at the Community of Christ Historic Sites is phenomenal. And so they are often hosting youth groups that travel through, holding congregational retreats, and leadership retreats. And the people at the Historic Sites are super humble. And I wish they did more bragging about themselves. But there's a small staff of people that manage and preserve these historic sites, but they do incredible things in few numbers and limited resources. And so when you look at the amount of worship services that are happening in the Kirtland Temple, where people are coming from all over the country, all over the world to hold a service in the Kirtland Temple, which is a phenomenal experience, it takes people and resources to make that happen. And I think we're incredibly blessed with the dedicated staff and volunteers that are there holding the doors wide open and welcoming people. You know, we're stuck on history, and we love church history and love to dive into the details and debate them. But as a volunteer, say, giving a tour of the historic sites, you're not only talking about church history, but you're with living and breathing people who are drawn to these historic sites for a variety of reasons. And so I think about my time at the Kirtland Temple, you know, you're telling stories about the architecture, and highlighting elements of the story. But you find yourself often with people who are struggling, who felt led to go to this place. And I think of an experience I had with a woman whose husband had just passed away, and she got in the car and drove and for whatever reason arrived at the Kirtland Temple. And her and I were on a tour together. She didn't know why she was there. She didn't have any connection to the historic site. She was just emotionally lost, not knowing what she was going to do on the journey ahead. And we sat in the lower court and she cried and opened up her heart to me. And that's something you're not trained to handle in museum management classes. But at the Community of Christ Historic sites, the way we

opened up our doors and open up our hearts to people who are struggling on life's journey—that's a connection to the past. The Kirtland Temple has been the center of community life in Kirtland where the doors have been wide open for years. But to see that continuing to happen today, whether somebody is breaking down over the loss of a significant loved one, or they're struggling on their spiritual journey, and they need a place to talk, we find that those hard conversations are happening at the Historic Sites every day. And it really is a blessing of Community of Christ. Well, Barb, that story made me cry a little bit. That...what a wonderful ministry that the Historic Sites Foundation and the people that the historic sites, the volunteers that historic sites are offering to people. And I'm so glad that you brought that out of the ministry that is being offered there and the ministry that is so so important to so many people and people we may never see again. So thank you for bringing that out. That's really important to hear and it was touching for me to hear. What is coming up in the future? What do you have to look forward to from Community Christ Historic Sites Foundation or Historic Sites? What should we be looking forward to?

Lach Mackay 35:08

So with Historic Sites, we have recognized for a number of years that we need to do a much better job of recognizing international church history. So right now, all our officially designated sites are in the US, but our story is much, much bigger than that. And so in the not too distant future, we plan to be turning our attention outward, and would like to start designating historic sites in other places. Now when I say that I'm not interested in us designating, I'm interested in what are members in French Polynesia or African nations or India? What are the important sites to them, that we can then help raise awareness of, we're not in a position to be buying properties or building buildings. So a lot of this will probably be online. But how can we start to recognize the important places the sacred places for our story around the world? That's what I'm excited about in the Church History and Sacred Story Team, I think will be part of that as well.

Barbara Walden 36:09

For the Historic Sites Foundation, we are looking at, as I mentioned, creating new educational resources, looking at children in church history or looking at creating a booklet on women in Community of Christ history in preparation for our October tour, and we're also exploring new possibilities for church history outside of the US. Potential bus tours in Italy as well as French Polynesia. So we're really trying to... as Lachlan mentioned, expand our understanding of Community of Christ history outside of US boundaries. And on International Women's Day this year, we were able to share a video that Lach captured during a recent trip to Tupua'i sharing the story of a woman who was the first one on Tupua'i to welcome the missionaries who arrived there in 1844, the first missionaries, so that is a new story. For many people. Her name was Tefi Nari, and the storytellers that Lachlan was able to capture on video where her descendants sharing her story, which as you can imagine, they take great pride in. And as a female, I take great pride in hearing that story, as well of welcoming a person of the island to these strangers. So we are exploring all sorts of educational programs. And as I mentioned earlier, we're doing our best to help fund the needs of Community of Christ historic sites, when I look over the past of some of the things that we've done working together with the people at the historic sites, whether it's replacing the foundation of Emma and Joseph Smith's Mansion House, or in the 1980s, reconstructing the Red Brick Store, and helping purchase the historic structures that today make up Heritage Plaza, or even helping support the preservation of Joseph Smith III's Liberty Hall, which began

in the 1970s. I think of all these amazing projects we have done, thanks to the generosity of our supporters. But also knowing in the future, there's going to be so many more marvelous projects that we do to help preserve Community of Christ Historic Sites. So I just want to give a shout out to our generous supporters and donors who've helped us over the past 50 years, and who are continuing to step up and help us out financially as we continue to preserve the past for the journey ahead. So thank you. Thank you.

Carla Long 38:24

And thank you, thank you! Lach and Barb, we're coming to the close of our podcast, is there anything else that you want to say that I didn't ask about or you just want to make sure that the listeners hear this before we close out the podcast,

Lach Mackay 38:36

I'll just throw out that, we also recognize that we need to turn our attention to the 20th century, many in our historical community, and I'm talking to the larger church now, not just employees or staff. But just in general, we've been really focused on the 19th century story, particularly the first half of the 19th century, and there's so much to learn about the 20th century church. There's incredible stories there as well. And so we recognize that that's important, and we're starting to turn our attention there.

Barbara Walden 39:07

For me, there's two things that come to mind. First, your story is church history. That's something you're going to hear over and over and over again, from me, the importance of preserving your story, your congregation story, your reunion ground's story. That is so important that we record these stories for future generations. Because just as we reach to the past to learn the lessons that are embedded in our shared church history. Future generations are going to be looking to your story to learn the mission initiatives or the enduring principles. So it's just incredibly important, and I know you have a lot of humble listeners who may not think their story's all that important, but I argue that it is significant in understanding the church today, as well as helping future generations. The other thing I want to share is there are volunteer opportunities and summer internship opportunities at the historic sites. And just as Lach and I were hooked on history after spending a summer in Nauvoo, or Kirtland, that continues to happen for generations of summer interns, so if you're interested in spending a summer on the Mississippi, in Nauvoo, or in Kirtland, Ohio at Kirtland House of the Lord, I encourage you to reach out to Lachlan Mackay and ask about those summer internship opportunities. If you're interested in volunteering, and we're always looking for retirees who want an adventurous experience of historic sites. There are volunteer opportunities. And if you reach out to Lachlan, he'll tell you all about them. Whether you enjoy gardening or maintenance work, or you love sharing stories, we're always looking for volunteers to serve as greeters and museum store staff and certainly storytellers.

Carla Long 40:50

How wonderful. Thank you so much, both Lach and Barb for sharing that story and sharing so much about wonderful, wonderful things that are happening in the Historic Sites in the Historic Sites Foundation and telling us a little bit about the differences between the Restoration Trails Foundation... I mean, my gosh, there was just so much that we learned today. And I really, really appreciate both of you. Thank you so much.

Barbara Walden 41:11

Thank you, Carla. Good to be with you.

Lach Mackay 41:21

Thanks!

Josh Mangelson 41:21

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast. Project Zion Podcast is a Ministry of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze