

Cuppa Joe | Historic Sites Fall Lecture Series | John Charles Duffy

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, John-Charles Duffy

Karin Peter 00:29

Welcome. This is Cuppa Joe, where we explore Restoration history. And I'm your host, Karin Peter. Here at Cuappa Joe, we partner with the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation to interview the presenters from their Spring and Fall Lecture Series. So our guest today is John Charles Duffy. John Charles is a professor of American religious history, with an earlier background in literary studies, which we didn't chat about before we started here. So maybe next time, we will John Charles. He's a member of Community of Christ Sacred Stories Ministries Team, and in 2022, he organized an historic hymn fest for the 50th anniversary of the John Whitmer Historical Association. And for close to a decade, he has also organized a memorial service held each June 27 at the Joseph Smith Jr. grave site in Nauvoo, Illinois. So welcome, John Charles.

John-Charles Duffy 01:29

Welcome to you, or I guess I should say thank you for having me.

Karin Peter 01:32

Absolutely. This is a repeat guest appearance on projects if you've been with us before, and we've enjoyed having you. So we're really grateful you agreed to come back. So your contribution to this Historic Sites Foundation Fall Lecture Series it's titled, "There's an Old Old Song: Hymns as Objects of Historic Restoration," which is intriguing to say the least for those of us who grew up singing those old historic restoration hymns. So you offer a description of your lecture. And in it, you say, "when we think of historic restoration, we most readily think of buildings or other tangible objects, but hymns are an intangible cultural heritage that can be salvaged." And you have revised the hymn texts so that they will be compatible with Community of Christ current theology, yet still evocative of the time in which the hymns were first written. That's a challenge. That is a challenge to do both of those things. So I'm looking forward to hearing from you how that worked out. But first, I want to start out with this question, why? And what are the most important aspects about this that you wanted to be sure that you brought to people's attention?

John-Charles Duffy 02:53

So as to the why, well, I love I love music, I love singing, I love hymns. Hymns have long been a really important part of my spiritual practice. My background is that I was raised in the LDS church, then became alienated as in it's all left, kind of drifted around for a while, eventually found a way to Community of Christ. And during the course of my life, when I was beginning to detach from the community I had been raised in, which was a very painful process, hymns were a source of great comfort to me. I was going to Brigham Young University at the time and on Friday evenings, I would find the classroom with a piano in it, of which there are many BYU because they use classrooms for church services. And I would sit there and for hours, I would play hymns that I loved. So, yeah, that's a lot of the hymns I was playing were these sort of old, Latter Day Saint hymns, you know, from the early periods, some from Emma's hymnal that continue to survive in the LDS community. So I love these old hymns. And when I was asked to do the, the hymn fest for the John Whitmer Historical Society, I was really excited about the idea. And then again, as you said, I've been for several years doing these memorial services on June 27 at the Joseph Smith historic site, where every year on the anniversary of Joseph and Hiram Smith deaths, we do a memorial service that brings together you know, our staff there at the judgment, the strike site, which is Community of Christ site, but also the, the missionaries who are in Nauvoo for the LDS church, we come together and we do a service that the Joseph Smith Historic Site organizes. And again, I like to have historic hymns be part of that and in particular, this last year that was that we did, we had a really intensive musical component. So yeah, I'm, because I'm LDS what attracts me to Community of Christ rather than any other kind of Christian community out there is precisely that we do have that heritage going back to Joseph Jr. and Emma and the ministry that they and other early Saints were engaged in and I value being rooted in, in that heritage, even though the way in which I relate to their understanding of what they were doing is different. I don't understand the great and marvelous work in quite the way that they did. But I still look to their teachings and the scriptures that Joseph Jr. produced, and the hymns that people were writing back then I look to them for images and teachings and principles that guide my understanding of what it means to be a disciple in the modern world.

Karin Peter 05:32

Okay. So we share some of that love of the old hymns. I'm not a musician, but my father is, and so I too am steeped in the tradition of hymnody. So why don't you kind of walk us through some of the content from your lecture, I want to make sure our listeners know that you can go and view the lecture on the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation webpage, they're all archived. And so if you want to see John Charles and the October 19 lecture, you'll find it there. So let's talk about that a little bit, John Charles.

John-Charles Duffy 06:08

Great. So first of all, I'm going to share a visual here, for those who are with us, in visual form and able to see it. You have here a couple of what you're seeing the programs, the covers of the programs for the JWHA Hymn Fest, which was in the Temple in Independence. And then over on the right, you've got the cover for a book that I created to share the music and the scripts for the service of remembrance that was done at the Joseph Smith Jr. grave site in Nauvoo back in 2023. Both of these documents are available online, we'll go ahead and put the URLs for that in the description of this podcast. So people can download those programs and can use the historic hymns that are there as I've revised them if you'd like to use them in your own congregation or on other occasions where that would

be appropriate. So let me talk a little bit about... let's take a hymn as an example of you know, how can you refurbish something from the past, which is not in line with our current theology, but could be made so with some thought. So let's start with this hymn here. "There's a Feast of Fat Things." This is a hymn that was written by WW Phelps. He wrote a lot of the hymns that appeared in Emma Smith's 1835 hymnal.

Karin Peter 07:36

Let me stop you there, John Charles and say, this is not a happy hymn title. This is not a hymn title. It resonates to us to our modern perspective, but go ahead.

John-Charles Duffy 07:52

We could have a conversation on why There's a Feast of Fat Things. This doesn't necessarily Oh, I see what you're saying. Okay. Yeah. All right. Yeah, yes. Although, you threw me there a little bit, because I have to say there are some WW Phelps hymns were from the title, you know, this is not going to be good theologically. No, this is actually this is the section a pretty nice image we have to work with here. We'll talk more about where that image comes. Okay. (All right.) So but Phelps wrote a number of early hymns. The Spirit of God, like a fire is burning is his work. Praise to the man the hymn in praise of Joseph Jr. Written after Joseph Jr. was killed was his work. So with this particular hymn, it's a missionary hymn, and it had 12 verses in its original version plus a chorus. You and I were chatting a little bit beforehand, you played a role I believe in helping to produce put the 2013 hymnal Community of Christ Sings. And you were commenting that some of these old historic hymns have a lot more verses that we've seen today.

Karin Peter 08:52

Right, I was reviewing content and some of it was rather frightening.

John-Charles Duffy 08:58

So it was a 12-verse missionary hymn. And it there's because there's 12 verses, there are a lot of different kinds of scriptural images being incorporated here. But the image that grabbed my attention, and the thing that I became really excited about was, There's a feast of fat things for the righteous preparing, and that is a reference to a passage from a Doctrine and Covenants. This is from section 58. This is a "words of counsel" given through Joseph Smith, Jr. while he was in Independence, Missouri, during the trip where he declared that this was going to be the Center Place. This will become the headquarters for the Saints worldwide ministry. This is the place where they're going to build a temple. And in these words of counsel, the Lord tells the disciples gathered there that he has brought them here to independence, so they can lay the foundation of Zion. And then he goes on to say, and so that you can create a feast of fat things for the poor. A feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, a supper of the house of the Lord to which all nations will be invited. And that language about the feast of fat things the wine on the lees well refined is itself an echo of a passage from the book of Isaiah, where in chapter five of that book, the prophet is envisioning a future where in the mountain at Jerusalem where the Temple is built, he's envisioning that the Lord is going to make what the prophet calls a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined, as his image of God creating abundance, and the Doctrine and Covenants becomes especially abundance for the poor. And that's an image that I that speaks very strongly to me. My current understanding of my Christian discipleship has been shaped

partly by liberation theology, a form of 20th century Christian thought, which emphasizes the idea that the gospel should be good news for the poor, it should be good news for the oppressed, we as Christians should be working to abolish poverty, as we say, in our mission initiative. And I think this image captures that, this image that Zion is about preparing this feast for the poor, ending poverty, creating a world where the poor can enjoy abundance of feast to which everybody is invited. And the version in the Doctrine and Covenants goes on to say it should be everyone who's coming to this feast, the rich, the learned, the wise, the noble, the poor, the blind, the deaf, everybody, the people who are social elites, as well as the people who our society often marginalizes or treats as less than they are all invited to this feast. So the fact that we have this hymn, which is focusing on that image, is one I really like, but there are other things going on in this hymn that aren't so great. So here's the first verse of the hymn, as WW Phelps wrote it: "There's a feast of fat things for the righteous preparing that the good of this world, all the saints may be sharing, for the harvest is ripe, and the reapers have learned to gather the wheat, that the tares may be burned," and then it closes on the choir goes, "come to the supper, come to the supper, come to the supper, the great bridegroom." So I really love like the first half of that verse that talks about the feasts, and the good will be shared. And then we get this other metaphor about the harvest and it's time to gather the wheat, and you need to go burn the tares. And that will be a very different thing happen in the hymn. At that point, of course, he's drawing on passages from Jesus' parables, images of divine judgment and Phelps loved images of divine judgment. He had a very apocalyptic sensibility. He had this very strong sense that it was going to end soon. He talks about this in a lot of his hymns. The day is coming when the wicked will burn. And one of his hymns he, he talks about the fact that the wicked will burn and then one line later, he says that this is glad tidings. He loves the idea of the wicked burning. And for me, that's a big problem. Right? That's not... The apocalyptic element of our tradition is one that I've had to kind of work out a relationship to, I think there's like a message there, a promise of God undoing forces of oppression and injustice, which, you know, that speaks to me. But I think we need to be really careful about celebrating or glorying in the thought of God wiping out the people we don't think are just, and I'm not particularly interested in singing that. So that was like, I was definitely gonna get rid of when I revise this hymn. So what I did, and what I said about doing this, I tried to be very disciplined about it. So it wasn't just a question of, okay, I don't like these words, they're gone, I'm gonna make up something new. What I did was I tried to go back to the parts of the hymn and see, okay, I don't like that particular part of this verse, let's go through like the 12 other verses of the song. And if there's something else I can plug in there instead, like where do I find words in this hymn that's do still speak to me, that are aligned with the values of Community of Christ today. And I can plug that in instead. So I'm still being true to Phelps's language, and true to aspects of his vision. And so in that sense, my historical refurbishment of this hymn is happening in a historically faithful way. And what I end up doing with this particular verse, My version goes like this, "There's a feast of fat things for God's people preparing that the good of the earth, all the like maybe sharing, and a call to the nations from Zion goes forth, come all to the feast of the house of the Lord." And those of you who are actually looking at these words on a screen maybe you can see what I changed, a couple of things here. In his first version, his version of the first lines go, "there's a feast of fat things for the righteous preparing" (Karin: Yes, I noticed that right off) that the good of the earth, the Saints may be sharing. And I changed that, you know. And what I did here was I chose language that I mean, what's happening here is that Phelps is a sectarian, yes, it's really strong sense of I belong to the one true church, and everybody else is wicked. And so the good news is for, it's for us. It's for my group, not for the other groups. And you know, that's not how I understand God. I think God's grace flows more

generously than that, more abundantly than that. But I chose language that I thought Phelps could still say yes to. I mean, I think Phelps would say, yes, this feast of fat things is prepared for God's people, which is what I plugged in for instead of the righteous. My understanding of who God's people is, is I think broader than Phelps's understanding the language is one that I think folks would still be able to say yes to. Then the second part I changed it from I got rid of that whole business about the tares and the the burning and the wheat and all that. I went to, in this case, I actually did go to different Phelps hymn, because there wasn't anything in this particular hymn I found helpful. But I went to another Phelps hymn, and I found this verse he had about a voice going forth. And I kind of adapted that to fit into the context here, put that in, the part about coming to the feast of the house of the Lord, which is how I finished up this verse, that comes from another verse in this hymn. And so now we have a verse that can, I hope, speak to Community of Christ identity today. I did something similar with that for like several of the verses here. So I took what was initially a 12-verse hymn, I turned it into a four verse hymn. And so we're still using your the, we're still using Phelps's, his words Phelps's images. We've sifted through it, we found the ones that can still resonate with us today, given our own theological understanding and our own emphases, letting the other stuff go. And now we have I hope, a hymn that I would love to see Community of Christ congregations singing this hymn again, as a way of tapping into this image from the very beginning of our faith traditions' history. This image of those disciples in Independence, imagining, we are here to lay the foundation of Zion and prepare this feast of abundance for the poor and for all people. So that's one example of how I played around with these hymns.

Karin Peter 17:16

So, I love the fact that you actually use Phelps his words, even if it came from other places to maintain the integrity of of his work. It it's interesting to hear that it was a repeat idea for him this apocalyptic the wicked will burn idea was a theme that resonated with him. But was he out of the kind of Puritan culture of Congregationalist in the New England area? Is that where this some of these ...

John-Charles Duffy 17:51

Good questions... I don't I don't recall exactly what his background had been, what was his religious background prior to coming to the Saints, but independent on whether he's a Baptist or a congregationalist or what have you, he's clearly someone for whom that that kind of millennialism was very appealing, you know, he's someone who is very dissatisfied with the state of the existing world. And there's this longing for God to intervene and obliterate it by fire, and start over start over fresh. As I'm sitting here in judgment of Phelps, I should say, by way of trying to be more humble here, you know, I can certainly resonate with you, there are things going on in our world that's, that I hate, you know, there are structures of injustice, and there are structures of oppression, and there are huge, huge, seemingly insoluble problems in this world. And so I can, I can very much relate to and empathize with the the desire to just burn it down, as people say, and you know, that's what the apocalyptic tradition offers people. It's a stream within our scriptural tradition, which appeal to people, especially people who are going to persecution. And it's this this stream in our scriptures, you've seen the Book of Revelation, for example, that offers a vision of God's work which says, you know, God does have a zeal for justice. All this oppression, all this injustice is not what God wants. God does want to make a world where it's going to go away. The apocalyptic future though ultimately imagines that happening through a kind of divine intervention. And we just have to like hold on white knuckle, be faithful until that intervention

comes. That's not my understanding of what God works in the world. You know, I understand it as we have to make these things happen. You know, God depends on us to bring about this better world. And so that element of the apocalyptic tradition does not speak to me. But again, I can empathize with that incredible frustration and that kind of feeling of helplessness of living in the face of these enormous powers that have to be toppled. And that's the that's what appealed to Phelps. You This idea of wanting to see a very different world and in his case, imagine you would happen when Jesus comes back and the wicked burn.

Karin Peter 20:08

So let's look at another example.

John-Charles Duffy 20:11

Yeah, let's take a different hymn. Let's try... This is a hymn that was not familiar to me as an LDS person. It's one that I only encountered after coming to Community of Christ. And even then I didn't encounter it until I began looking at historic hymns. So if and I believe that Andrew Bolton probably introduced me to this hymn via a hymn fest that he and I did at one point, this is the angel message, also known as "I have Found the Glorious Gospel," this is a distinctively reorganization hymn. You're smiling. So is this a hymn that you grew up singing?

Karin Peter 20:42

Oh, I sang it when I was a kid? Yeah, yeah.

John-Charles Duffy 20:45

This hymn was written by an RLDS man named James Edwards. And then the music that we've always used for it was read created by an RLDS composer named Henry mills. I don't think it survived pass the gray hymnal which was used in the 1950s. So by the time you get to Hymns of the Saints, which was produced by the RLDS church in the 1980s, the last hymnal created before the name change to Community of Christ, it already dropped out. And you can see why, when you look at the hymn, but it was a very popular hymn, in it's day. So I was interested in seeing if we could salvage this thing. So here's how the first verse of the hymn goes into original form. "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years, with its gifts and blessings, all so full and free. And my soul is thrilled with gladness and banished are my fears, since the precious Angel message came to me." And then there's a chorus that goes, "then praise the Lord, oh my soul, abundant mercy, oh, how free in joyful song by Spirit death a chord, since the precious Angel message came to me." Let me let me do the second verse as well to kind of give the continuation of the flavor of the hymn, the second verse goes, "I wandered long in darkness, yet sought the narrow way. And my life was like the surging of the sea. But now I am rejoicing in this the Latter Day since the precious Angel message came to me." So what we have here is a song, which is basically celebrating the restoration of the truth. So it has that sectarian sensibility that we are the true Church, all the others are false. In our day, the one true church has been restored, we are it. And also, there's this kind of Edwards, you know, he has this really kind of strong, the way he paints the picture, the singer and the hymn is constantly contrasting their life before they enter the church to their life after, and it's a very dramatic night versus day kind of transformation. I used to be in darkness, and I'm basking in the light. My life has been miserable, and now it's also great. And so I think there are a couple of reasons this hymn eventually was set aside. One that sectarian

dimension to it, you know, by the time you get into the 1980s, the reorganization, The Reorganized Church's theology is shifting, we're less sectarian, we're not committed anymore to the notion that we are the one true church. And also, I think just the simplicity of that worldview of everything was great, everything was dark, and now I joined the church, everything's great. You know, like, our lives are not that simple. In fact, our lives are a lot more complex and the compilers of later hymnals I think found this hymn uncomfortable for that reason. But it's a really bouncy and exciting Yeah, I mean, just real words here, but the reality is much more enthusiastic and rousing.

Karin Peter 23:46

is the tune the one that in the read, hymnal became "Send Me Forth O Blessed Master because that's the one I remember for the verses.

John-Charles Duffy 23:54

I don't know "Send Me Forth Oh Blessed Master," I'm literally grabbing my

Karin Peter 23:59

It's in it's in Community of Christ things but it has different words to it but it's Oh, da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da...

John-Charles Duffy 24:13

No, no yeah. Send Me Forth Oh Blessed Master, "Send me forth oh blessed master there are souls in sorrow bowed, send me forth to homes of want and homes of care." No, it's not that hymn though it is that same kind of rousing, camp meeting, reunion style. This hymn the tune goes... let's see now, Well, now I have that in my head. "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years (ah yearh) the blessing bountiful and free." I think that's the actual words. "And my soul is thrilled with gladness and banished are my fears since the precious Angel message came to me. Then praise the Lord Oh my soul, abundant mercy oh how free, in joyful song my spirit doth record since the precious Angel message came to me." Yes, I think it's sad we lost the rollicking, joyful tune.

Karin Peter 25:15

Yeah.

John-Charles Duffy 25:16

And what I like about this hymn again, as someone who's interested in trying to find ways to help contemporary Community of Christ tap back into the earlier phases of our tradition. The idea of the angel message is one that remains important. The idea that I belong to a particular religious community, which has its origins at a particular historical moment, in the early 1800s. The world was being transformed, it was becoming what we know as the modern world, the Industrial Revolution was beginning which would eventually transform the globe. Our world is rapidly changing, we have a whole bunch of new challenges as a result. And at precisely that moment of global transformation. God reaches out and finds a receptive community of people who are seeking, who are seeking a new outpouring of continuing revelation, who are seeking for an outpouring of God's Spirit to be able to do God's work in the world. And that becomes us, we become a community. And I don't think we're the only community guys working through but we are a community that God is working through. And our

community began because people back in the early 1800s, were looking, responded to God's call, and heard that call anew. And that, I find that exciting, the idea of this image of the angel blowing his trumpet again in our day bringing this this new message, this new book, to share with the world that reaffirms the old gospel, but at the same time is speaking to the new challenges of today. That image of who we are as a community is what I find very exciting. So I want to see if do can I find a way to take this idea of the angel message and make it speak in a way that isn't sectarian. And that, you know, is also recognizing the nuances of our lives. Embracing one church does not suddenly solve all your problems. In this case, so as I when I was working with the Phelps hymn, my strategy there had been to try to stick with the original writers words as much as I could. With this hymn, I decided to do something different, I decided I was going to be a lot freer about revising the author's original language, but I still set some limits for myself. And one of those limits was I decided to keep the author's original rhymes. So I kind of anchored what I could do, I had to keep the original rhymes. So in this first, first, the key rhymes are years and fears, and then free and me. I was gonna keep those rhymes. And then the other thing was, I wasn't just gonna, like, make up new content. What I did was I went to the angel message, I went to the Book of Mormon, and I looked for passages or stories in the Book of Mormon. And also I kind of folded into that Joseph Jr's grove experience, where he's going to seek, and he has that first vision where he feels called to do God's work in the modern world. I took that story as well. And so that, for me is the angel message. It's those two stories, the grove experience is the Book of Mormon. And so I went to those stories, to look for themes, language that I could use for the new hymn. And so my revision of verse one looks like this. "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years with its gifts and blessings, bountiful and free. And a voice of hope and gladness, allays my doubts and fears, since the precious Angel message came to me." And that phrase, a voice of hope and gladness, that's a phrase that I recognize. But also because I grew up with that phrase in a way that I think a lot of people in Community of Christ didn't, because it comes from a section of Doctrine and Covenants, that still appears in LDS editions, but not in Community of Christ editions. It's one of the sections having to do with baptism for the dead. (It went to the appendix.) Yeah, it went to the appendix and then like disappeared, which is in great shape, because this particular section has this wonderful passage at the end. It's almost like it's almost like a song at the end of which begins, what do we hear in the gospel that we have received a voice of gladness, and it goes on in this kind of poetic fashion. And it evokes the idea of where we've heard a voice from Cumorah. And we heard the voice of this angel and this angel and the voice of God speaking to us at this moment. It's a catalogue of all the ways in which early on in our faith community's history, people felt that they were receiving revelation to guide them in this new venture they were undergoing. It's a great passage, and that's the passage I was alluding to here. And so the voice of hope and gladness that to me, I mean, it really resonates. And it's an image I hope people can still relate to. Again, the original words were "my soul is thrilled with gladness and banished are my fears," which is that kind of like, oh, everything's great now and I'm like, well, everything's not great, but we are still hearing a voice that's calling us out. We're still hearing a voice that is giving us gladness that is easing our doubts and giving us hope to face the the great challenges ahead.

Karin Peter 30:20

So I like this one less, and I'll tell you why. Okay, so our listeners, so I am I grew up steeped in that kind of restoration one and only true church, Justice Smith worshipped to almost idolatry, if you will. And I have never been comfortable with that. Nor have I ever been really comfortable with restoration

scripture. But so when I saw the verse, both how it was written and how you revised it, where it connected for me, and it did immediately because I just finished writing for Project Zion Podcast Coffee to Go outlines for Advent. Was this is the Shepherd's hymn.

John-Charles Duffy 31:01

I don't know the hymn fill me in.

Karin Peter 31:04

No, no. I mean, if you look at just these words, this would be the hymn the shepherds would, when they went... the angel came, the choir sang, it was clarified. And then they went and told others. That is this. This is...

John-Charles Duffy 31:20

A message for you, right, the declaration that the Savior has come. Yeah, yeah.

Karin Peter 31:24

Yeah, because that's where my, that's where I can connect with it, because I I don't connect with the other aspects that they do connect for you and for many of our listeners.

John-Charles Duffy 31:38

So there is a disappointed sigh. I would love to somehow be able to convert you to be being able to find, I understand why it's difficult, I would love to help you be able to find a positive meaning in you know, the angel who appears in the 18th, the 19th century, with a new message for the world. But no, that's fine. If you're able to if the if the angel at the shepherd's fields in Bethlehem works for you, that's fine. Well, we'll start there, we'll work.

Karin Peter 32:07

That works for me. That was my connection, because I was living in those scriptures for several days. So.

John-Charles Duffy 32:15

So here's what I do with verse two. And here's an example of where I kind of pulled stories or language from the Book of Mormon in to replace what he had originally. Again, here's the original verse two, "I wandered long in darkness, yet sought the narrow way and my life was like the surging of the sea, but now I am rejoicing in this the latter day, since the precious Angel message came to me." So notice the rhymes there way/day, see/me. So here's what I did. "There are times I pass through darkness, when I cannot find my way, like a ship without a compass lost at sea. But I know to all who ask, God sends light in this hour day, since the precious Angel message came to me." The lines there are times past the darkness where I cannot find my way I was thinking there of early in the Book of Mormon a man named Lehi has a dream, which involves people stumbling through darkness, trying to find their way to the tree of life. And then God gives them a way to find their path, like a ship without a compass lost at sea, that's again, another Book of Mormon story. God provides a miraculous compass to help people make a journey across the sea. At one point, they stopped listening, the compass stops working, they lose their way until they pay attention again. I know to all who ask, God sends light in this our day.

That's the moral that Joseph Jr. explicitly drew in one account of his grove experience. His experience, lacking wisdom, going to God to ask, having this vision that guided him, he takes from that the message that anyone who lacks wisdom can go to God and get it. (Right) So that's, again, my take on the angel message. Those are ideas that I hear in the Book of Mormon, in the grove experience that I find meaningful, not sectarian. And again, we're not saying like, everything's great now, but bearing testimony to the way in which Yes, I do feel that as I'm turning to God, as I'm turning to Scripture, as I'm turning to continuing revelation, I do feel guided, I'm able to find my way through this world.

Karin Peter 34:20

So, as a person who serves an office of Seventy, the whole idea of changing them from being exclusive to inclusive is I think, a gift that you bring with some of the changes that you've made in these.

John-Charles Duffy 34:39

So that's what I was doing. We got a chance to sing both of these hymns during the hymn fest. I always because it was Zoom, I was unable to hear people singing, but I hope they had fun doing it. I'm sure there are people there who had not sung "I Have Found the Glorious Gospel the Angel Message" for a long time but who were familiar with the tune and I hope that you know how Again, I would love to see congregations reviving this, I would hope that my new lyrics are ones that work better with our current theology and allow us to tap back into the enthusiasm that this song represented for people.

Karin Peter 35:12

Well, I think it also allows people to find some value in the content of restoration scripture, as opposed to the historicity of restoration scripture, which is where I continue to support restoration scripture in the sense that the content has value. Right, right. And that's what you've done with some of this. So I appreciate that, as well. And I did have a flashback to my old congregation when I was growing up or you Auburn, Washington people, and hearing the ladies at the Alto sing the harmony, and I could just hear it in my head some of those voices. So that was a wonderful moment.

John-Charles Duffy 35:53

A reminder to folks that these hymns, my revisions of them are available. If you go to the URLs that are listed in the description for the podcasts, you can download the hymns that I use both at the hymn fest for the JWHA at the Temple in Independence and for the memorial service in Nauvoo. There's some other gems. So this is just a list of the things you'll find in these programs. For the JWHA hymn fest, I scoured not just the Community of Christ tradition, going back to the 1830s, but I was also looking in the hymnals of Sidney Rigdon's church which he founded after he broke with the movement after Joseph Jr's death. I was looking through Bickertonite hymnody. I was looking through Strangite hymnody. And so I was really excited to be able to pull together gems from those, you know, our cousins in the restoration, as it were. And then for the memorial service in Nauvoo the special theme was the Book of Mormon. And, some of the gems there are, one hymn text, which I don't think really survived past much past the Nauvoo era. So that was kind of, that was kind of fun to be able to revive. There's a hymn by Joseph III, in Praise the Book of Mormon, which I did some refurbishing to, which I don't think has been sung since the 19th century. So it was fun to be able to actually, you know, hear people singing versions of hymns that really had fallen into disuse, but that I hope are still meaningful to folks.

Karin Peter 37:24

So I love this whole idea. It's what we've done in our journey in Community of Christ from the beginning, we've refurbished things to make them work for where we are now in this part of our adventure as a faith community. So did you learn anything new, when you prepared this lecture? Was there something that just stuck out to you? Oh, I had not noticed that before.

John-Charles Duffy 37:51

I'm not so much that, but I did have kind of a clear sense that I was trying to explain to people like my motive for doing it. I was I was called back to words in Doctrine and Covenants section 161, was a council received through Grant McMurray. That was basically, these were the first words of counsel we received after the name change. And there's a line there that says we need to be respectful of tradition. And the kindness is to go on and say, you know, we need to, of course, to change, we need to update for the times. But there's that caution of, and then those words, accounts were coming to us right after, a few decades after, the 1960s, when we have made a major transformation. I think it, really, it's significant that in both sections 161 and 162, we get calls, to not lose sight of our past and be respectful of the past, be respectful of tradition, we're told in 161. And then 162 has a passage that's very famous for people in the historical community, about listening to your journey as a people, because it has many things to teach you. And I think it's I think it's noteworthy that at the outset of the 21st century, after this major transformation we have gone through, there's this kind of caution, to not devalue our own past, you know. Find ways to continue to make that pass useful to you. Yes, you've transformed and that transformation has, you know, brought about new good things, and put you on a new trajectory. But there are still things from the past you need to take with you on this journey. And that's, I guess, essentially what I'm trying to do with these hymns, trying to find ways to make that old tradition speak to us today on our new journey.

Karin Peter 39:29

Spoken as a true historian and member of that Community of Christ History and Sacred Story Team. Thank you for that. So, my next question, John, Charles has more of a personal question for you. And that is how has your study of historical humility and really your love or historical humanity shaped your own discipleship where you are right now?

John-Charles Duffy 39:56

When you look at an old hymn, and you have to figure out like, oh, Why does it make me wince? It helps you gain clarity about your own understanding of who God is and how God works in the world. But it's there's also an exercise there, where and I modeled this earlier in this presentation when I was kind of I sort of like dissed on Phelps Apocalypticism, but then kind of shifted gears and said, but okay, let me be more empathetic toward it. There's a humility involved. Right? There's on the one hand, I feel really strongly that as disciples, especially as disciples in this community, as disciples in a community that has really undergone a major change, because who we are now is, in many ways, very different from who our forebears were, we have to have the confidence to trust where we feel the Spirit is taking us now. And that means where I'm looking at those old hymns and going through that wincing process, I need to be able to have the confidence to say no to that tradition, I think I hear the Spirit call me a different way. But there is also that call to humility, the very fact that I'm engaging with these hymns at

all, and going back to them to say, okay, what can I learn from the past? Where is there something here that can inspire me today? I think it's a really helpful dynamic. You and I are recording this on November 3, so we just got done celebrating Halloween, which in the Christian liturgical calendar is All Saints Day and All Souls Day, two days in which Western Christians traditionally recall disciples from the past, who have gone before us in our tradition. And those days, call the church to remember that we in the present, we alone are not the Christian community. We are part of a community of generations of people before us. And there should be an appropriate gratitude and humility about that. And that's, I guess, at this particular moment of the year, I haven't been thinking a lot about that. And what I was doing with these hymns is very much in that in that Spirit. We're a communion of saints. And that communion of saints is not just all of us here in the present, trying to figure out how to be one United Church, despite our differences. We are a communion of saints that includes the dead, those who have gone before us, and ...

Karin Peter 42:33

A great cloud of witnesses to be, right,

John-Charles Duffy 42:35

Yes, and we need to still be one community. You know, eventually, God willing, we will all be together in heaven. And we will, again, be one united community. And that means that we here in the present need to be able to achieve oneness with those of us who were in the past, we can't divorce ourselves from that we can't cut the tie. We have to find ways, just in much the same way that in the present, we have to find ways to reach out across our theological divide, so we can be one community and work together in Christ will, in the same way we have it with our own past, we have to find ways to reconnect with the people in our past, from whom we have become, in certain ways estranged because of our theological differences and disagreements.

Karin Peter 43:22

Yeah. And that that does seem to be the contemporary way to handle things is if we theologically disagree or disagree in any sociological way politically, we simply excise the others ... instead of instead of connecting. So you mentioned Doctrine and Covenants, 161 and 162. And, and how important you think that is for listeners to heed that advice. But what is one thing when you did this lecture that you really hoped people would take away from it? I mean, obviously, for me, it's some kind of reconciliation with the restoration of Scripture. So we don't need to go there. But other people don't, Charles.

John-Charles Duffy 44:05

Well, that's that is the big thing. I mean, it really, it really was fundamentally about about that. When I do the sport that Joseph Smith, once I when I do this for the John Whitmer Historical Society, when I do the lecture for the Historic Sites Foundation, I appreciate the choir there because I'm talking to people who do in fact, love the past, right? The challenge for me is, you know, how do I because I'm aware that there are people in the Community of Christ today who just that's not the past is not what's of interest to them, and I get that. And I feel judgy about it. And I would like to try to get you. I'm the nerd who's excited about this particular piece of the tradition and I would really love to see people get more

excited about it. So what really excited me about the lecture was, you know, people are tweeting in the chat you can see people commenting and how much they're enjoying connecting with these old hymns and, and I hope that people are having, you're not just an astonishing experience there, but the real that there's a spiritual practice there. I'm hoping that's a really spiritual experience for people. And I would love to be able to share that. You know, the sense of spiritual nourishment that I find connecting with these hymns, I would love to be able to share with other people. That's all for me.

Karin Peter 45:19

as a as a fellow lover of history, although happy to share the parts I don't love. I appreciate your words on that, because I do want the restoration story and the connections with that to be something that people appreciate, which is why we do Cuppa Joe, you know, to help people hear more, hear more about it, learn more about our own tradition, our own story, our own journey. So, before we close, I want to give you the opportunity, do you have any closing thoughts and wise words you would like to share with our listeners?

John-Charles Duffy 45:57

Wise words, I do not feel qualified. I, you know what I think probably the best way for me to conclude is just to repeat the words of counsel, we got through Grant McMurray. Be respectful of tradition, listen to our journey, listen to our past. Again, you know, there's nothing wrong with our passing judgment. And deciding that this and this and this, that doesn't work for us anymore. But at the same time, there's needs to be that humility of continuing to listen, and being surprised sometimes by ways in which something you hadn't expected to speak to you suddenly does.

Karin Peter 46:35

Marvelous. Well, I want to thank you very much for being willing to come and visit with us here at Cuppa Joe today, I want you to know, you can look for an invitation about the time World Conference 2025 rolls around to come and visit the combined quorum experience of all the Quorums of Seventy. Together, that would be a great place to sing some of these new more inclusive Invitational versions of these historic hymns. So maybe we can get you to come and share in that way with that group.

John-Charles Duffy 47:13

I would love that.

Karin Peter 47:16

So in the meantime, for our listeners, we encourage you to view this lecture, as I mentioned before at historicsitesfoundation.org. This and all the other lectures from the Fall 2023 series are available there in the archives. This is Cuppa Joe, part of Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karin Peter. Thanks for listening.