

Cuppa Joe | Women of the Restoration | Christiana Steadman Salyards

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Wendy Eaton

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is Cuppa Joe, where we explore restoration history. I'm your host, Karin Peter. Today's episode is part of our ongoing series about women in Community of Christ history. We tell the stories of women and how they shaped and led and offered ministry, and had profound impact in the history of Community of Christ. Our guest to share these stories with us is the wonderful Wendy Eaton and Wendy is a favorite here at Project Zion Podcast. And we're so happy to have her visit with us again. Wendy works at the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois, and is the administrative assistant to the Historic Sites Foundation and we are catching her just at the end of tourist season at Nauvoo, and so we're grateful that she made time for us to do this episode today. So hi, Wendy,

Wendy Eaton 01:30

Hi, Karin.

Karin Peter 01:32

So it's good to see you again, for our listeners. If you were able to go to World Conference back in April, hopefully you got a chance to stop by the Historic Sites booth in the back foyer of the Temple and you may have met Wendy there. So if you didn't, you can give it another try and 2025 and you'll have a chance to meet her there as well. So Wendy, today we're going to be talking about a woman who made really significant contributions to the church, but isn't all that well known, in fact, to me was unknown. So this will be all new information to me. And this person's name is Christina... is it Salyards?

Wendy Eaton 02:17

It's Christiana Steadman Salyards.

Karin Peter 02:20

Christiana Steadman Salyards. Okay, so as I put in our outline, and I do this every time, but you don't hear it, if you're listening is I have it in parenthesis now, Wendy, here is where you tell stuff and I interrupt you to ask questions. So that's our standard way of going about these. So Wendy, what do you have to tell us?

Wendy Eaton 02:42

Christiana was a fascinating woman to dig into the life of. And a big part of what made me so happy to bring her story is she wrote her autobiography twice. Oh, and so I was able to find both copies, because they were in church publications. And so I'm able to tell the story straight from her. And that always makes it so much better for me, because I'm getting the information not from a third party. These are the stories Christiana chose to share about her life, what was the most significant things for her.

Karin Peter 03:21

And Wendy, we've talked about this before, but maybe not on air. The fact that that's really important when we're talking about women's history, because for the most part, history is written about and by men. And so the women's voices are harder to find their authentic voices, journals, letters, that kind of thing. And you sometimes have to really dig to get us as close to the source as we possibly can. So I just want to remind our listeners about that, that these women's history episodes Wendy has to do quite a bit of research to get us information that has the integrity of being the voice of the woman involved. So thank you.

Wendy Eaton 04:05

But what surprised me when she publishes her autobiography, as I say she had two copies the first time it was 1924 to 1925, published serially. So in the *Autumn Leaves* magazine, which was a monthly magazine, there was essentially a chapter each month that readers could breathe and follow along. And so *Autumn Leaves*, longtime listeners would know, this is one of my favorite resources. It's a magazine for teenagers and young adults that ran from the late 1800s into the 1930s. The next time that it was printed, was 1952. In the *Saints Herald*, which, again, it was published serially, and that's what surprised me is here's a woman that I had only heard very little information, basically just her name. And her biography was in the *Herald*, not all that long ago. So maybe I need to spend more time in the *Herald* looking for women's voices. But yeah, it was exciting to have both of those to, to bring to you today and I'm happy to share those stories along with some additional to get exact birth dates and things like that of certain individuals.

Karin Peter 05:22

Okay, so why don't you begin with telling us about Christiana? Yep.

Wendy Eaton 05:30

So she was born on March 30, 1861, in Rochelle, Illinois, which is maybe by today's travel standards about an hour west of Chicago. Her maternal grandparents, John and Christie Landers, were members of the Church under the leadership of Joseph Smith Jr. But I don't think they lived in Nauvoo. They were in Illinois, but I haven't figured that piece of the puzzle out when it when did they join? But at the death of Joseph Smith, Jr, the Landers were among those people waiting for Joseph Smith III to reach adulthood and make the decision to lead the church on his own. And so they attended the Amboy, Illinois conference in 1860, when Joseph Smith III made that decision. So, they were they had jumped in right in there with the beginnings of the Reorganization. So I'm going to talk just briefly about John, because he was a pretty prolific church minister, within the first few years of them affiliating with the RLDS church. He was ordained a high priest, and he was assigned as a missionary. He requested parts of Canada. Ended up in New England, which hit me close to home because in the biography, Christiana's biography, when she's talking about John Landers, she mentions little Deer Island, Maine in the 1860s, which is where my family my paternal family came into the church. So I don't know specifics of exactly when my direct ancestors joined, but it was connected with Cristiana's grandfather. So we'll come back to her grandparents in a little bit, but I want to share some of her childhood stories first, which they were very much a part of her early childhood because her parents were living with the Landers for a number of years. So this would be Christiana's mother's parents. When Christiana is born, it is a week later, when Fort Sumter inspired on in the American Civil War begins. Right about the same time is the Plano Illinois church conference. And the topic of conversation as Christiana is in those first days of her life, are the war starting, and the church which is just about a year old at this point in time. It's a really interesting juxtaposition to see these two major things happening right in her first few days of life, because her grandfather, as I just mentioned, was very devoted to the church early on. And one of his youngest children, John, he was a fairly young man, he joined the Union Army pretty quickly in the Civil War. He lived through the whole war, and Christiana is about four years old, when the war comes to an end. And one of her earliest memories is of a band parading down the street near her home to celebrate the end of the war. She, little four-year-old, runs out to go follow the band as four-year-olds tend to do. Her uncle is weak and very tired, he barely makes it to the corner to see the band. And she remarks that he died not long after. So you again, it's a really interesting setup. Those of us who have studied history, we recognize that the very beginnings of the Reorganization is starting right at the same time as the civil war. And this is one of those family moments that intersect those two very closely. She continues her story talking about how sociable of a child she was. She loved having visitors to the home aunts and uncles and cousins and would be heartbroken, she said, when they left. She spent a lot of time with the kids in her neighborhood. She talks of swinging in the barns, exploring the meadows and, as kids would as well, helping out around the home. She begins school when she's six and education would be the anchor of her entire life. Even at six years old, she remembers this teacher she had as a very kind woman, and Christiana wrote of her, "I say it reverently and soberly, for the love a wise and intelligent teacher ministers to the little children who look up to her with their fervent hearts is the food their young souls need." So as I bring in these different quotes of Christiana, I hope listeners pick up how often she talks of women in ministry, because that is one of the things that made me really excited to read more of her stories. She definitely recognized ministry of women, even in a time where the church was not ordaining women. When she's nine, the family moves to a new community and she and her siblings have the opportunity for the first time to attend Sunday School. Her mother is hesitant to send them to a Latter Day

Saint church, so she was probably relieved that there was not an RLDS branch anywhere nearby. She remembered the difficulties of growing up in Illinois in the 1840s and what the church was dealing with, and I think she just didn't want her children to have to deal with that. So Christiana attended Methodist Sunday school with two neighbor girls who live close by and they were able to walk to and from together. She learned a few hymns, learned some scriptures, but it didn't really seem to catch too closely to her just yet. Her parents didn't attend any Sunday schools or worship services. But she saw the things she was learning in this school replicated in their lives, particularly that principle of loving your neighbors Christiana writes of a woman who used to show up at their house pretty often right after dinner time. And Christiana's mother would always prepare a meal for this woman. Christiana, being the daughter in the household was the one made to run up and down the cellar stairs to fill out the little meal with whatever was left from the family meal. And she grumbled occasionally about having to do this chore. And on one day, her mother, knowing exactly what she's grumbling over, generally informed her daughter that they ought to be very kind to this woman because she had been kind to them in the past, when she had plenty to share, and she doesn't anymore. When Christiana's father had first moved to the area, her mother said, this woman had often provided meals for him. At 13, she decides to stop attending Sunday school, she has other interests in mind and growing responsibilities at home. She specifically mentions the addition of laundry as a reason to take back her Sundays as a day that she could truly decide what she wanted to do on her own. And it seems like the this typically ended up with her in the window seat reading most of the day, which sounds pretty ideal to me. When she graduates high school, she takes on more responsibilities in the community by becoming a country school teacher, pretty typical profession for a woman who's not interested in going straight into marriage and raising her own family to teach school. At 18, she attends a revival meeting at one of the local churches. She wasn't interested in going, but her friends wanted to go and had begged her to go along with them. She wrote that she was pretty reluctant, and she expected to be very uncomfortable at the words of the preacher. And she writes that as the congregation began to sing, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me," her attitude shifted. As she put it, I could no longer withstand the appeal of religion. But she was still pretty wary of it. Her friends didn't continue on with the evening meal meetings, typically, revivals were a week long, where you had church every single evening for many, many hours. And so her friends were good with that one night, but she kept going. And at the end of the week, the minister approached her and was basically Hey, I've got a new convert. He's all excited. And he asked her, "do you feel better now that you've attended church for this whole week?" And she responds, "No, sir, I feel worse." And he gave her a cold look and said, "Well, there's something wrong there," and he walked away from her. These revival meetings had left her with questions that the minister had not addressed. And so she takes it upon herself to start studying. She begins to pray at night. She hadn't really prayed before. And so she's just kind of figuring it out on her own... a little bit of memory of her Landers grandparents and leading the family in prayer for when she was quite young. But she also starts asking her mom questions and again her mother was raised in the Latter Day Saint movement. And she begins talking to her father's mother, her paternal grandmother who was raised Methodist. They answer her questions and things just kind of continue on. When school closes, Christiana decides that she wants more questions answered. And she and her cousin decide to travel to Blue Rapids, Kansas, which is where her Landers grandparents are now living. So they get on the train, they make journey west, and they arrive on a Wednesday in time for the evening meal, after which the grandparents whisked the girls off to prayer and testimony meeting. And Christiana is interested in the differences between this tiny little congregation, and this great big revival meeting that

she had recently attended. The big difference for her is that she never really trusted that revival minister, but she trusted her grandfather, because he was her grandfather, and she loved him. She thought, this is somebody who's going to be honest with me when I ask questions. Unfortunately, it's a very short visit to Kansas. She's got to get back to teach for the next term. Before leaving, her grandmother asked if she wants to be baptized. She's not willing to make that commitment just yet. She's got a lot of questions still. So she just returns to Illinois. But this must have been pretty impactful, not only her grandparents, answering her questions, but seeing how old they were, and living so far away from family because she decides that summer and we've made it up to 1884. Now, that summer, she decides she's going to move in with her grandparents to help take care of them. Her parents don't really need her at home. She could get a teaching job in Kansas, so she was going to go do that. So she arrives in August, on her grandfather's 90th birthday. And this marked some big changes in her life. So her grandparents, of course, they're excited to have their granddaughter back with them. And on Sunday, Grandfather sets off early to go get the church ready, because even at 90, he was the one taking care and leading the congregation there in Blue Rapids. He expects Christiana to escort her grandmother to church, and she's willing to do that. But she's been attending mostly Methodist congregations. So she's like, I'm just gonna leave grandma at the door, and I'm gonna go down the street to the Methodist Church. But then her manners kick in, and she thinks it would probably be really rude for me to just leave my grandmother at the door and leave. And so she ends up going in. And so this would be about the second or third time she's interacted with this congregation. But this time, she recognizes how much this congregation truly loves her grandparents. And they treat them just like family. When the weather is not great for grandfather to make it to church on his own. The congregation went to the Landers' home, so that they didn't have to get out of the house, they just squeezed into that tiny home so that they can be with their minister. So, a little word of caution as I proceed into the next story. This, of course, is an era of one true church being really important within our movement. We don't profess that today. But it's pretty significant to understanding why Christiana writes the way she does at this point. So it's during this visit in Blue Rapids, Kansas, on a very cold evening. So the congregation has gathered into the Landers' home, and she's talking with some of the different church members and explaining that, you know, you believe the Book of Mormon, you think it's a true record, but the world discredits it. You believe Joseph Smith was a prophet but the world says he was an imposter. I don't know the truth of any of these things, and I can't judge a man who's dead. And that's why I don't really want to join your church. So one of the ministers hangs back, and he's like, you know, how much have you studied the Bible? And have you read John chapter seven, verse 17. She says, No, I really not I've read the Bible all that much. And he's like, okay, and he leaves for the evening. So Christiana, then turns to her grandfather says, what was this guy talking about? And of course, I'm paraphrasing. This is not how you talked in this time period. But her grandfather says, we'll go get me the Bible, and I'll show you and he opens it up and instructs her this passage, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself. So essentially, if you study the Scriptures, you will begin to understand that this is the right church to be in. She continues to think on these words, it she says it's impossible to not think of religion in her grandparents home, and she wrote, "so it was that my thoughts were turned to the consideration of religious matters by the peaceful, gentle influences of my surroundings." She works her way through her grandparents collection of the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Book of Mormon, the *Herald* collections that they had. She asked questions, and they teach her hymns and grandfather shares about his missionary experiences. And what Christiana begins to understand is, she would never settle all her questions. The best thing that

she could do was to just join a community and have that experience of growing within a community surrounding her. Whether it's her grandparents, or it's the congregation. Well, she decides to go ahead and be baptized. And this is one of those passages that I really love. So in October 1884, she's only been in Kansas for about two months now. She's just really been studying on all these things. She decides to be baptized and she writes, "the women of the congregation immediately set about preparing for the sacrament. With the backdrop of autumn colors, I stood on the pebbled shore of the Little Blue River. A hymn was sung and a prayer offered. And as I stood there in the water, I covered my face with my hands and lifted my soul to the Father of spirits in wordless appeal. My soul in that moment was trying to find God and tell him my needs. But my petition did not voice itself in words, I simply looked up to the invisible God in earnest desire. But it was a prayer and he understood." So after she's baptized, the congregation goes back to the Landers' home for her confirmation, and of course, a celebratory dinner because we have a very strong history of that kind of thing. Christiana ...

Karin Peter 22:45

We like to eat together. That is, that's, that's a marker of our denomination.

Wendy Eaton 22:51

So Christiana continues to study and to pray. And she writes, "We should be seekers after God. But when we seek Him, it must be through prayer, as well as study and through the devotion of all that commends itself to truth." And so she has this very balanced understanding of continuing to explore what religion means to her, Unfortunately, in March of 1885, so that's six months later, she's informed that her father is terribly sick, and the family needs her back home in Illinois. She makes a trip back, and she helps him recover, though it's a very slow recovery. It's March when she gets word of this, and it's June before he's well enough to leave the home. He had worked in one of the local boat yards, and on one of the first warm evenings, they were able to go out and take a drive, he's finally strong enough to be out in the night air. They get home and suddenly they hear the alarm bells at the boat yard. A boat that had been in for repairs, had caught fire. And it was a catastrophic fire for the company. Here her father is just starting to get strong enough that he'd be able to start going back into the office and then this fire happens and he knows that means there are going to be job cuts. And to make it harder on himself. His son is also an employee at that same boat yard. So he decides to resign. thinking this way, my son will keep his job. And I don't know if my strength will ever fully be recovered. So now Christiana is put in the tough situation of having to find a job that would keep up the household for herself and her parents. And so she attends a normal school, which is very similar to like a junior college at this time. Knowing that when she completes the program, she would be qualified for higher paid teaching positions, and it's just about a year long program. So she enters into this, this school. And the hot topic for college students in Illinois at this time would be Joseph Smith and 1840s, Nauvoo, as well as the Civil War. These are all very recent history. And so here's Christiana, a new member. She doesn't personally know a lot of this history, but she knows it impacted her family very personally. And she's just now learning how to communicate what her church is and who her church isn't, and to explain what the members believe. So it's an interesting experience, her being in this school. She writes a lot of these stories down, but my favorite one is very telling of the Church and its cultural expectations of the time. So friends had invited Christiana to

attend church with them one Sunday, and she says she found the Catholic service to be incredibly interesting, and she really liked the ceremonial aspects of much of the worship service. And after church, she and her friends returned, they were boarding at a house and one of the rooms in this house they were boarding at was a music room. So Christiana sits down at the piano to play, and the other girls get all excited and ask her to play some lively music that they can dance to. Well, for Christiana, she's pretty shocked. You do not dance on a Sunday in Community of Christ in this time period, that is not appropriate. And she explains this to her roommate. She can't do that that's not in keeping with the Sabbath. She then spent several paragraphs in her autobiography, essentially preaching against worldly pleasures on the Sabbath. It was very amusing to read that portion of her autobiography. So this edition, the *Autumn Leaves* edition, which is the first one published of her autobiography, it ends with this point in her life. And when it's published again in the *Herald* in 1952, she repeats a lot of the stories but then she picks it up from here on, and this marks her beginning of active service for the Church throughout her lifetime. So in 1886, her mother decides that her parents, Christiana's Landers grandparents, they need to move out of Blue Rapids, Kansas. They need to be in a community where there will be people that can help take care of them. She can't quite convince them to move back to Illinois, but she does talk them into moving to Lamoni, Iowa. So Christiana's mother has not joined the church. Neither has her parent, her father, but they know enough about Lamoni to know that this is somewhere that they could send her parents and they would be safe and surrounded by people who would help take care of them. So her grandparents make this move. And they meet one of the many well-known personalities of Lamoni at this time, Marietta Walker. And so in reading the *Herald*, Christiana had gotten to know who Marietta was. She was writing the "Mother's Home" column at this time. And in reading these different writings, these editorials by Marietta, Christiana decides to write and she acts on this impulse, writing the letter, mailing it before she could talk herself out of it, something I can really sympathize with. And the reply comes very quickly. Marietta had heard of Christiana from her grandparents, as grandparents are likely to brag about their grandchildren. And Marietta had been thinking about writing to Christiana herself and so they begin this lovely correspondence back and forth with one another. And when summer vacation comes, because Christiana is teaching and again at this time, when summer vacation comes, she decides to travel to Lamoni to see her grandparents so it's a shorter train trip now from having to go all the way to Kansas. And while she's in Lamoni, she has a chance to meet Marietta. So, not too long after she arrives there's a Sunday gathering, lots of people filling the Landers home. Marietta arrives, invites Christiana outside, they seat themselves on a log pile, and Marietta lays out her grand scheme. So anyone who has studied the life of Marietta Walker know that she had a lot of big ideas. And she wanted Christiana in on those. Christiana didn't think she had the right skill set. She was pretty happy being at home and her schools that she was teaching at so she just kind of... no, I don't think so. But Marietta had something in her favor. In visiting Lamoni, Christiana, for the first time had the opportunity of socializing with church members for a week, and so this was a big draw, and it sticks with Christiana, who decides, Maybe I do want to go ahead and move to Lamoni. So she does just that. She settles in Lamoni and she finds a teaching position in the Lamoni High School District. She's not paid as much as she had been, but she was making things work out. Her grandparents' home was a little too small for the addition of Christiana to live with them. So Marietta takes the initiative and invites her to come live with her in her nice big Lamoni home. So Marietta...

Karin Peter 30:40

Marrietta Walker was always a schemer. She really was.

Wendy Eaton 30:47

So, Mariana had many different publications that she was working on at this time, and she pulls Christiana into the work of helping edit a lot of these to get them ready to go to print. And her, Marietta's, work keeps her in contact with a lot of church leaders, in particular, Richard Salyers. And in late 1891, Richard and Marietta, officially organized the church Sunday School Association. So this is five years after Marietta approached Christiana with the idea of, we can start our own Sunday school and you can help write this material. And this is when Christiana was like, No, I don't think so. That's not what I want to do. But I, I had a thought that you might ask me because this is the right time period in Lamoni, Iowa and Marietta is all over the place. Graceland college starts in 1895. So Marietta has a lot on her plate. All of its centering around education. Let's get Graceland going for these young adults. And let's get a Sunday school going with lessons developed by our own church members. And I want Christiana to do it even though she doesn't want to do it yet. So Marietta has got a lot going, she had a lot of big plans going on. So now we're in January of 1892. Christiana's beloved grandfather, John Landers died at the age of 97. President Joseph Smith III preached the funeral sermon. And he noted all the great works that Father Landers had accomplished in his life. A lot of the church leaders called John Landers, Father Landers, which I found really interesting, I guess, maybe respect to his age at that point. So this is January, a few months later at the April general conference, Richard Salyers, FM Sheehy, EA Blakesley work with Marietta in organizing the first meeting of the Sunday School Association. Blakesley was voted to serve as superintendent of the group and Marietta was his assistant, both asked Christiana to write the lessons for the Sunday School material. Christiana thinks a little harder on it, and especially the impact that this would have on her income with her teaching career, but she decides to try to make it work. And so in her autobiography, Christiana calls this taking up a life's work. Jerry Gunsolley, who is the superintendent of the Lamoni Public Schools was asked to help Christiana in developing the Sunday School material. They worked out of Marietta's home because of course, Marietta wants her finger in the pie. And they have a Bible Dictionary, a King James Bible, a copy of the Inspired Version, and a Sunday school lesson from a congregational church to serve as kind of their example of how they could set this program up. It's a very slow start, as any big new project would be. They get the first lesson done, set it aside, started on the second, get it done, set it aside, start on the third, and they hit a problem. Jerry Gunsolley failed to return in the afternoon after they had started that morning. And Christiana was pretty hesitant to try to continue on by herself. But she does and the next morning Jerry still hasn't shown up to Marietta's house. And Marietta tells Christiana, well just keep going through the morning and then we'll go find Jerry after lunch. So again, Marietta, and I can't imagine her coming chasing you down. Why haven't you shown up to work? When they arrive at Jerry's house, they found him in bed with malaria. It was a pretty severe attack, and by the time he recovered, he still didn't have the energy to carry on with his role as superintendent with the public school and to help Christiana with the Sunday school. She's going to have to carry on alone. This left her in a bind. If she continued writing on her own, she didn't think she would have time for her teaching position. And she's very devoted to this work now. She's put a lot of effort into it. She's really caught on to what the potential of this program could be. And so she decides to put her career on hold to continue working on the Sunday school materials. They call these the Quarterlies because one would be a binding of lessons printed four times a year, so one for each quarter of the year. And by the time the first of the

quarterlies is ready to be printed. Marietta decides to test the waters a little bit by printing the very first lesson in Zion's Hope, which is not a resource I've talked much about. This is the children's newspaper. And these first lessons were intended for fairly young children. When response came back about this Sunday school lesson, there were 800 folks on the subscription list because they weren't that excited. But they wanted more. They wanted lessons for teenagers or intermediate aged children and for primary children. So suddenly Christiana's workload tripled. In November 1892, the very first of the quarterlies was published. The Sunday School Association sets up a treasury to fund the publication. And soon there are 1000s of people on the subscription list. In 1893, Christiana's, parents announced that they intend to sell their home in Illinois and move to Lamoni to be near Christiana and Christiana's grandmother. They still haven't joined the church, but they wanted to be near the family. And this is where most of their family was. And they thought well, maybe we can help out with the household a little bit. So they build a home for themselves in Lamoni. Christiana is able to move out from Marietta's home probably save her a little bit of moving out of that home. And they're able to make things work out so that Christiana could go back to work. Because she's teaching the Sunday School material. She is being paid, not a lot, but she's getting paid. But now there's a household to pay for. And her parents and grandmother don't work, they're of an age that they're not able to work. And so she finds a way to balance these two big jobs by going back to working in the Lamoni public schools. This brings additional income to the family, which is very much needed, and Christiana is able to make it work but she ends up having some health issues that I think are probably related to this workload that she has. She talks about teaching large classes that first year, eating lunch at noon, reaching home about five in the afternoon, taking a very short rest to get some dinner in and then working until 10 o'clock at night on the Sunday School material. That is Monday to Friday, all day Saturday is devoted to working on the Sunday School material and then she could relax on Sundays. Her grandmother liked to sit nearby as Christiana works. She could be the first one to hear those Sunday school materials and another family member takes up some interest. And Christiana's father decides to be baptized. I'm not sure whether her mother ever made that decision. Or if she just kind of affiliated alongside and just like okay, I'll support you, but I don't really want to join. But her father's baptism must have meant quite a bit to her and I wonder how much she would have recognized that her work for the church probably impacted that decision of his. So I'm going to continue down a little bit with family so we're going to jump around a little bit in time here. So at 94, her father's baptized. Her grandmother dies in 1896, and her father dies in 1898. Right at the turn of the century, so 1900, her sister is widowed, and she moves herself and her children into the home Christiana was living in and this sister dies in 1910. So Christiana kind of helps take care of her nieces and nephews. In 1918, the family moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, which for those who don't know, it's kind of halfway between Lamoni and Independence. And then in 1924, they go ahead and move to independence. Jumping back into the 1800's...in 1885, a very big change happens in Christiana's life, which it's interesting that she barely writes about it. She, oh, I had mentioned the General Conference 1892. That's one of the Sunday School Association really gets going and a man named Richard Salyers was part of that. He would soon become World Church Secretary. That's the terminology we would use today. They use slightly different terms back then. Richard was a son-in-law of President Joseph Smith III and for longtime listeners, when I've talked about the Smith family... Go back to Joseph Smith III and his first wife, Emmeline, Richard's wife was their youngest daughter Zedi. So Zedi had died. Richard was widowed, he had three young children. And in June of 1895, he and Christiana got married. And now she's 34 years old, she suddenly a stepmother and a mother am teaching and writing Sunday School material. She was a very busy

woman, the children are eight-year-old Zaydi ...they like to recycle the family names in the Smith family. So eight-year-old Zaydi, seven-year-old Joseph and five-year-old Richard, so the kids are even pretty young. At this point in time, Christiana only makes three references to these kids in her autobiography, which is really interesting, because when you read some of the compilation books about women's history, they gush on and on about her being this devoted stepmother. And I only found three very brief mentions to the kids and Christiana's own works. I'm not saying she was a disinterested parent, she just didn't choose to write about that in her autobiography, The first reference she makes, I get this picture of an overworked mother who just needs the kids out of the house because she says she sends the three of them off to church on a Wednesday evening to a youth activity, so that she could get some work done. The next mention is of specifically the youngest child, he's playing on the floor next to her while she's working on the Sunday School material. And the last reference is this same youngest child, but when he's 28 years old. And so he was a very frail young man, he was married, starting a family on his own trying to work but his health wasn't that great. As was common at the time, they suggested he move to the southwestern United States, to see if that climate would improve his health. His wife can't travel with them, she's got kids at home, she's not going to haul them all the way across the country. So Christiana packs up all her writing tools that she needs for the quarterlies and moves with her son-in-law to Phoenix, which she calls the torrid heat for about four months while he tries to recover. Unfortunately, he doesn't get much better and is sent to a sanitarium a long-term residential hospital, in New Mexico, and she returns back to the Midwest. So those are the only references she makes to these. A little bit of digging, I could let you know that between Richard and Joseph who both married there were five grandchildren, that Christiana would have had relationships with. The oldest Zedi. She had a very long life, but she never married or had children. So just the five grandchildren there. So let's go back to Christiana's writing. For 35 years, she is the sole author of the senior level youth Sunday School quarterlies. Most of those years she was the one who adjusted lessons to intermediate and primary reading levels. She wrote in February 1902, that she had 13 lessons to complete by World Conference, which was happening in April. 13 lessons doesn't sound too bad, but you have to remember she is the one adjusting these lessons to the three age levels. So essentially 39 lessons to write in just a couple months. She worked hard, she met her goal. I can't imagine how she did it, but she did. Every few years amid all these writings for the quarterlies she would add an article for the *Autumn Leaves* magazine, which she also served as one of the editors so every now and then she would come and help with the editors who we're getting that ready for printing. In 1927, church leaders were adjusting a lot of the church departments at this time shuffling people around shuffling groups around and the Sunday School Association is absorbed into a general church school department. Christiana was asked to step down as creator of the youth Sunday School material, so that she could focus on a series of books called *The Gospels Through the Ages*, which were books intended for adult Sunday school lessons. So here, 1890s into the 1920s. she's been focused on children, this is right about 30 years. And now she's going to shift to adult Sunday school lessons. So I think about the impact of youth who started in the 1890s, with her lesson plans going on through their childhood and young adult years. And suddenly, she is also creating the adult Sunday School material. She had a huge impact on countless church members. It's impressive.

Karin Peter 45:54

When we talk about formation ministries, that was one person during that time period, because those kids grew up. And now she's writing for them this so she totally formed their identity of what it was to be a disciple for how many, how many young people?

Wendy Eaton 46:12

Yeah, there's no way of knowing how many young people and youth ministry programs were really launching in this time, too. But yeah, huge impact on the church, just her writings alone. And so now she's in these adult Sunday school lessons. And because I don't have publication dates for all of them, there are three books that she completes between 1927 and 1942. And each of these books is focused primarily on scripture study. So the first one is called *Jesus and his Message*, the second, *the Men Nearest the Master*, and the third is *The Enduring Word*. So we do have copies of these books at the Joseph Smith Historic Site library. And I venture to say that some congregations have these books in their libraries, especially if they have older libraries. But when I was looking up these books to find them in our library, they were marked as controversial, which to me, I'm like, ooh, controversial, let's go read that. But the only thing I could really find controversial about them, is the idea that they are printed in this time period where we are really pushing one true church, and the resources that she was using for her biblical scholarship. They were good for the time period, but they would be severely outdated today. So if you do go find these books and want to see her writings for yourself, go right ahead and do that, I think it'd be great to go have a chance to look at these. But keep in mind, and read it in a historical context and seek out source material of current theologians, especially Community of Christ theologians, which ones they would approve, or I'm gonna get in a lot of trouble for recommending books that are way outdated. I want to give just a very, very brief synopsis of each of these books. So *Jesus and His Message*, exactly what that sounds like. It's about Jesus and His ministry while he was here on Earth. It's divided into four quarters because this is a system that she was good with working in. And each quarter focuses on a different part of his life using the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants. And in each of these four parts, there are 12 lessons and one review lesson. So 48 lessons in this book that she created for this adult Sunday school class. And I love that in the foreword of this book, President Frederick M. Smith is the one who writes the foreword and he, he uses a lot of words. So I'm just going to share the last couple sentences that he writes in this foreword. "Few persons in the church have brought to their work better preparation. In addition, her intimate knowledge of the claims and teachings of our own church have its goals and objectives. Her long experience as a teacher of our youth, and adults, all constitute qualifications which make particularly welcome from her pen, a book on the life and message of Jesus." He was a very, very well-read man, and he was impressed by what she had put together. The next book *The Men Nearest the Master* is about Peter, James and John, so three of Jesus's followers, that's exactly what it is, again, 49 lessons, this time divided in three parts, one part for each man, and again 49 lessons, these are a lot of lessons that she's working on developing. It seems like each book was intended to cover just about a year, of course material for Sunday school classes. The last book, *The Enduring Word* is probably her longest book of lessons. Maybe the print was just bigger and I didn't notice in my quick skim through the books, but it's also divided into four parts, each with 12 lesson plans and reviews. And this book is focused on Zion, and especially the building of Independence, Missouri. So again, that's where that controversial... I don't like the controversial just keep that in mind. This is very focused on what the church was looking at at this time period. There are two church publications, the priesthood journal and then history of the church that I want to read a couple excerpts from, about what leaders are

writing about Christiana's work. So the priesthood journal in volume three, there's a list of 12 books created as encouraged, not required, but encouraged reading for all priesthood members, half the books, so six of the 12 were by F Henry Edwards, which is not a surprise, but two of the other six books were by Christiana. The other two books in case you're interested, two were by committees, one was the bishopric and then two were by lone male authors. In Volume seven of the priesthood journal, they're writing about an upcoming publication of Christiana's, and they write, "For adults, there is a preparation by our honored quarterly editor of more than 50 years, Sister Anna Salyers. Sister Salyards is an untiring student and a most careful writer. We shall trust and pray that in her advancing years, she may be permitted to complete this valuable work for the church." To phrase that another way, I'm going to quote the history of the church volume five. "With regard to the preservation of restoration teaching, it soon became apparent that non-Latter Day Saint materials could be drawn on and modified by such people as Anna Steadman Salyards. With regards to the rights of those who do not hold priesthood to teach the children, the young people, even the adults, early theory had to be modified in light of the evidence that Marietta Walker and Anna Salyards were probably two of the most influential forces of the church. Young missionaries looking for source material for their preaching soon found that Salyard's quarterlies rivaled anything they could get from sermons and reports in the *Herald*." So huge recommendation to Anna's writings. Christiana.

Karin Peter 53:05

So when we talk about this, it's one thing you say, oh, yeah, women didn't serve in priesthood at the time. So that's a big kudos to her. But it's even more than that. Because culturally, that would not be expected culturally, for a female to even be considered that theologically leading or scripturally sound, nothing to do with religion or doctrine or the church, but just in regular culture. That's unheard of. For her to have that kind of praise. So that's amazing. Yeah.

Wendy Eaton 53:42

So just as you're saying it, in appreciation for all her work Christiana was honored at the close of the 1939 World Conference for a distinguished service to the church in literature. She's honored again in 1942. Again, recognizing her work. Near the end of 1944, her husband Richard dies, and in 1948, she decides she doesn't want to live any on her own any longer. So she moves into Rest Haven, which is a church sponsored retirement community in the Independence area. This is a time period when she's working on that second draft of her autobiography. She dies 16th of April 1951, not longer after her 90th birthday. And that second edition of her autobiography is printed the following year. She's buried at Mound Grove Cemetery in Independence, Missouri, which is not too far from the the Independence Temple complex. Quite a number of church leaders are buried there. I think it highly appropriate that this church leader is also buried there. So, I'd like to close by sharing part of one of her articles that she wrote for *Autumn Leaves*. The title of this is "The Night When There Was no Meeting." It was published October 1912. And again, as a reminder, *Autumn Leaves* is a magazine intended for teenagers or young adults. It's published from the 1890s to the 1930s. And in the original, she's using a lot of coded Edwardian language. And I'm not sure how much younger readers back at this time period would have understood. Apart from one word that I had to look up, I was pretty clear on what she was writing about. And I was pretty surprised at the content. And so just a word of warning, this story might be a little uncomfortable for some of our readers, it does talk very briefly about the sex

industry. But again, October 1912, "The Night When There Was No Meeting," Christiana writes of a Sunday School Business meeting that thanks to miscommunication, only she and Callie Stebbins show up so they decide to cancel the meeting and they hang around the Lamoni congregation talking about a book that Callie had just finished reading, and a stranger walks in the back door. She introduces herself and says that she worked for the Salvation Army and being interested in her work, they invited her to sit and share with them about that. So I'll be quoting some passages and others I'll be condensing for clarity. So if you do go find this, it's not going to read exactly how I present it right now. So the visitor worked primarily with girls and women in the sex industry. Her business was to go forth in the world in the places where the purity of womanhood is in danger. She goes her way to save, to rescue, to redeem those fallen low, to lift humanity out of the dregs of it's been bitterness, to speak to girls and houses of shame of mother and home and Christ, to pray for those who could no longer pray. She spoke with sad familiarity of things we view from a great distance. She told us of girls betrayed into vise of their helplessness to extract themselves without help. She told us of the large percentage of those who once rescued did much good for the world. She told us of the dying girl who begged her to pray for her, saying I cannot pray, I must die as I have lived. She told of another dying girl, her last plea for comfort, anything akin to love in the dark hour when she was going forth to meet her God. As our evening drew to a close, we walked with the stranger, no, our friend and sister a portion of her way to her lodging place. We said good night and goodbye, and felt that we had parted from a gentle and gracious woman who God must love because she was lovely in spirit. The Lord bless you in your work, she said to them. And the Lord bless you on your work was our answer. In his name, we parted our separate ways. It seemed to me that there was a meet. That two or three were gathered in His name, and that God was there. But one was not of the church. Nevertheless, I believe she was of God. And I shall always treasure that memory of a woman of soft speech and gentle manner, who goes into places of great danger with the quiet courage and unshaken firmness, that accompanies a great purpose. So these are the incredibly impactful lessons that Christiana was bringing to the youth and the children that she was impacting.

Karin Peter 59:07

It's a marvelous story to tell and to, to end on that note. So thank you for selecting that for your close. So Wendy we usually take a moment to just kind of think about what aspect of the person we're talking about their ministry or their life do we think is still kind of resident in Community of Christ? So what do you see from Christiana Steadman Salyards life that you say, oh, I can see and kind of trace that back to her influence or her ministry.

Wendy Eaton 59:41

One of the first things that I thought about as I was a child, I think every Sunday School teacher I had was a woman. And the ones that stand out the most. None of them were ordained ministers, but I would very much say that they were ministers. And for me to put into context that the beginnings of our church's organized Sunday school program, it was two un-ordained women leading this ministry that was so critical for the church at this time, the church is exploding in Lamoni in those early Independence years, they desperately need things for the youth. And it was two un-ordained ministers, let's even take women out of that work on ordained ministers, but recognizing that you don't have to be ordained to be able to minister in this church. And I think that is an incredibly

impactful thing for people to recognize is, I think, a pretty unique thing for Community of Christ, that we all have something to bring and whatever it is we bring, when you look at it right. It's easy to see that it is ministry that is being brought.

Karin Peter 1:01:16

So Wendy, this has been just really fascinating to hear not just about Christiana but about her relationship with Marietta because it takes Marietta into a whole new kind of realm with her planning and coercing and managing of people which it seems like she was always trying to do. So as we bring this episode to a close do you have any last comment you want to share about Christiana?

Wendy Eaton 1:01:42

You can think about Christiana but what you just said about Mariana makes me remember back to when she was considering joining the church back in I think the 1870s It might have been a little earlier than that. Marietta told Joseph Smith a third, something along the lines of I'll join you, but if I find out that you are false, I'm gonna do everything in my power to bring you down. But if you are teaching what is actually true, I'm going to do everything I can to support you. So that is what just made me think of.

Karin Peter 1:02:21

Yes, she was a pretty strong lady is strong and opinionated lady. So once again, thank you for joining us to bring a female person from our church history to light for us so we can hear the stories of women in the history of Community of Christ. So any ideas on upcoming installments that we might be looking at in this series going forward?

Wendy Eaton 1:02:49

I'm not sure there's I had mentioned briefly in that that last writing I shared with Christiana, Callie Stebbins. There's possibility I might look into her life a little bit. But other than that, I'm not sure unless we want to just go on a Marietta Walker festival.

Karin Peter 1:03:07

Go on a festival of Marietta. Well, we'll see as we go along, but we do know that we'll be exploring more and more people from history, women from history in Community of Christ and hear their stories. So if you have questions for Wendy or suggestions perhaps of women from Community of Christ history that you would like to hear about, you can reach her at W Eaton which is w e a t o n at cofchrist.org. And until next time, this is Cuppa Joe, part of the Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karin Peter here with Wendy Eaton. Thanks for listening.