



From the Chair: Dr. Matthew Bowman

The 2022-2023 school year was a busy one for me, beginning with a sabbatical in the fall of 2022 during which I completed one book project—a short study of Joseph Fielding Smith—and began another. I was also selected to serve as the president of the Mormon History Association, beginning at the June 2022 MHA meeting in Logan, Utah and concluding at the June 2023 meeting in Rochester, New York.

The Mormon studies program has also been moving forward apace. We've hosted a number of events this past year, including a visit last fall from [George Handley](#) of Brigham Young University. He spoke on campus as well as to our partner communities—the Miller Eccles Group in Los Angeles and the Rowley Group in San Diego—on some of his favorite topics: Lowell Bennion and the LDS relationship with the environment and the natural world. In April we were delighted to host the ongoing workshop “Indigenous Perspectives on ‘Lamanite,’” a group of indigenous scholars reflecting on what the word means to their communities, both good and bad. And in May we hosted the Faith and Knowledge Conference, a group of young LDS graduate students interested in conversations about the relationship between their academic work and their faith.

In short, I'm delighted that CGU is enhancing its reputation as a major hub for conversations about scholarship and faith. Look forward to more such events in the future.

The next thing to do is to congratulate Caroline Kline. Caroline, a PhD alumna of our program, currently works part-time as the associate director of the Center for Global Mormon Studies, her salary funded by the donors to the Hunter Chair Endowment. She does a lot of things in this role, but the two worth reporting on now have to do with her current position directing the Claremont Mormon Oral History program. We have two large collections of oral histories, one dedicated to LDS women, the other to members of many of the Mormon traditions outside the United States. Caroline works with interviewers to gather and collate these oral histories.

These interviews make up a fascinating and valuable collection, and I want to recommend to you two products of Caroline's work. The first is her new book, [*Mormon Women at the Crossroads: Global Narratives and the Power of Connectedness*](#). It's based on interviews with LDS women in the United States, Mexico and Botswana, and the stories she tells about what the Church means to different women in different countries are fascinating. The book won the Best International Book Award at the Mormon History Association meeting in Rochester this year.

If you're interested in podcasts, we have one of those for you too. Caroline's podcast, "[*This Global Latter-day Life*](#)," is also based on these interviews. Each episode explores a theme—marriage, work, and so forth—through the stories of the people in our oral history collections. The podcast won the "Best Podcast" award from the Association for Mormon Letters a few months ago.

In the fall of 2023, Caroline will be teaching a course called "Podcasting Global Mormonism," in which students will work through these oral histories and learn the digital skills to create the second season of "This Global Latter-day Life." I will not be teaching a Mormon studies course because my wife and I have a new baby girl, but my temporary and partial absence from campus will not stall the programs we're unrolling. This semester, Blair Hodges, formerly of the Maxwell Institute podcast and now operating his own podcast "Fireside," is working with students on their own podcasts. And we are preparing a rollout of a major conference in May. Stay tuned!

As always, I am deeply grateful for your interest and support. We do what we do for three audiences - the rest of academia, for our hardworking and dedicated students, and for all of you.

Matthew Bowman
Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies



From the Council Chair: Christie Frandsen

Hello, friends! By the time you are reading this newsletter, I will have returned (hopefully safely!) from a 500-mile pilgrimage trek along the Camino de Santiago, the Way of Saint James. For a thousand years, this ancient network of paths has led Christian pilgrims from all over Europe to the shrine of the Apostle James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, in the Galician area of northwestern Spain, the traditional burial place of the apostle. The route I will take begins in France, climbs over the Pyrenees Mountains, and then continues west across northern Spain.

I will join the throngs of people who walk the Camino every year, some for the challenge of it, some seeking a transformational spiritual experience, some hoping for a miracle. I'm doing it for all those reasons. I'll be walking with my two younger sisters, but in a very real way, I'll be walking with the tens of thousands of pilgrims who traveled the Camino before me, each one leaving a trace of their faith and their sorrows embedded into the ancient path. Were it not for those earliest pilgrims, the ones who forged the way when the way was very difficult indeed, there would be no Camino de Santiago for anyone today. I owe my Camino experience to them, and I feel it an honor to leave my small trace of faith and devotion on the Way for those who will follow after me, perhaps even some of my grandchildren someday.

It occurs to me that this is a perfect allegory for the work we are doing with the Howard W. Hunter Foundation at the Center for Global Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University. The history we are working hard to collect, preserve, and share—the stories of our brothers and sisters in the global Church—are in fact the stories of

pilgrims traveling on this blessed but sometimes arduous “way” of global Mormonism. Whether we realize it or not, all of us owe much of our rich spiritual experience in the Church to them, the saints who first forged the Gospel path in far-away countries. These people, these saints, these brothers and sisters of ours, are now the majority of the membership of the Church, and we need to know their stories so that we can walk the path with them. We can learn so much from them if we listen to their stories.

That is why I am involved in this important work, and why I hope you will become involved too.

And now, for my report:

The Mormon Studies Council has been busy this past year! Our virtual fireside series “By Study and Faith” presented two New Testament firesides this year: one featuring Dr. Eric Huntsman straight from Jerusalem, and another with Dr. Jason Combs on the Ancient Christians. If you missed either of them, all our firesides are recorded and available on our [website events page](#).

And did you know that we have [our own YouTube channel](#) now? Check it out!

This was a banner year for Caroline Kline, assistant director of the Center for Global Mormon Studies. She launched her [award-winning](#) podcast, “[This Global Latter-day Life](#),” which is based on stories she gathered and published in her award-winning book, [Mormon Women at the Crossroads: Global Narratives and the Power of Connectedness](#). I commend them both to you with my highest praise.

Our students, current and alumni, continue to make outstanding contributions to the growing field of Mormon Studies. This past year, among our students and alum, we have had presenters at BYU Education Week, newly appointed BYU religion faculty, scholars working in the Church History department, and others in prominent academic positions all over the country, including at the prestigious Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. The work of our students is perhaps our greatest accomplishment.

I am thrilled to announce a major donation given by Mr. Mehran Nia, former president, CEO, and co-founder of U.S. Auto Parts Network. Mr. Nia donated his valuable collection of antique European and Asian furniture and art to the Mormon Studies program at CGU and was honored at a reception and curated gallery show in April. We have great plans for this generous donation, which we will tell you about in a future newsletter.

Finally, my friends, I have a request: we need your support to continue all that we are doing. Did you know that we are 100% dependent on donations from our supporters to fund the important work we are doing at CGU? We do not receive any financial support from CGU or any other institution. Your donations are the lifeblood keeping the Mormon Studies program alive. We love and appreciate our major donors— and we also love and appreciate those who can only afford to give a small amount. If everyone on our mailing list gave even \$100 a year, our on-going financial needs would be met, and we could move forward to fulfill the wonderful plans and hopes and dreams that Dr. Bowman has for this program.

If you believe in the powerful contribution that scholarship can make in strengthening testimonies and building up the Church throughout the world, if you personally have been inspired and enlightened by one of our firesides or conferences or the work of a Latter-day Saint scholar, if you have a desire to lift up the lives and voices of our brothers and sisters in the Global Church and help bring about the cause of Zion, then I urge you with all the energy I possess to contribute in whatever amount you can using this link:

<https://mormonstudies.cgu.edu/donate/>

I fervently believe that each of us working together, contributing whatever we are able, can accomplish mighty things. One step at a time for 500 miles or however long it takes.

Thank you, my friends.

Christie Frandsen
Chair, Mormon Studies Council
Vice-Chair, Howard W. Hunter Foundation



Student Spotlight:
Ken Adkins

Ken Adkins is earning a masters' degree from CGU's Religion program, emphasizing Mormon studies. He has been working at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City since 2021, and was the primary researcher on the [Belle Harris Prison Journal](#) project.

Hello, CGU Mormon studies students and supporters. It is an honor to share with you how this program has changed my life and launched my career.

After finishing a BA in Philosophy at BYU several years ago, I was ready to return home to Southern California. While living near my family in San Diego, I contacted then-chair Patrick Mason, took the GRE, and was admitted to the program. Due to family obligations and financial constraints, during my first year I commuted each week from San Diego to Claremont for my Wednesday afternoon class, stayed the night in an Airbnb, and attended my Thursday morning class the next day. During this difficult season, I was fortunate to have the support of the Mormon Studies Council as a recipient of the Robert L. Millet fellowship.

CGU offered me several things I was looking for. First, I would be able to work with Patrick Mason, and later, Matthew Bowman, top scholars in Mormon studies. Second, I would have the opportunity to examine my faith tradition in an academically rigorous environment. And third, I knew of the program's strong record for placing students in positions with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The program's reputation opened doors for me, beginning with a summer editorial internship at the Utah Division of State History's Utah Historical Quarterly. My experience at Claremont's archival studies program, formerly in conjunction with the Huntington Library, also secured me a position as an intern with the Global Acquisitions Division's Asia-pacific team at the Church History Department.

While at the Church History Department, I was approached by the department heads about publishing my graduate research. As part of my thesis work, I had transcribed and annotated the prison journal of a polygamist woman, Belle Harris, who was incarcerated with her 10-month-old son in the summer of 1883. I soon joined the department as a full-time contractor and research assistant to managing director Matthew Grow, and my research became a department project with me as lead historian. In February of this year, the department published [The Prison Journal of Belle Harris](#) as an online research resource under the Church Historian's Press imprint.

As my third year working for the Church comes to a close, I have accepted a full-time position with the Church History Museum as a conservator. In this position I will be researching material culture and managing artifacts, art, and objects. I owe this opportunity directly to my work in the Claremont Graduate University Mormon studies

program. I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of Terri Ingalls, who passed in 2020. She generously boarded me and other CGU students, making it financially possible for us to live close to campus. I have been blessed to be a part of the intellectually stimulating yet warm and friendly environment that makes studying Mormon studies at CGU a unique and rewarding experience.



Donor Spotlight: Mehran Nia

Mehran Nia, pictured here with CGU President Len Jessup at the first exhibition of items from the Nia Collection, is the founder and former CEO of U.S. Auto Parts. He became a new benefactor to the CGU Mormon Studies Program this year.

Mehran Nia is something of a Renaissance man. A refugee from the Iranian Revolution, he settled in California as a young man, and he and his father pursued very successful careers dealing art before Mehran turned to the more prosaic world of auto parts.

In June 2022, through good auspices of CGU Mormon studies supporter Michael Milam, Mr. Nia donated an extraordinary collection of early modern European decorative arts to the CGU Mormon studies program. Appraised at between \$2-\$3 million in value, the collection is not simply made up of paintings or sculptures (though it certainly contains some of these). It also includes an eighteenth-century German piano, nineteenth-century French ceramics, and a truly extraordinary Italian Renaissance cabinet.

For now, this collection is serving CGU art, museum studies, and art management students. Starting in the spring of 2023, students have been curating shows out of the Nia collection as they learning how to

curate and exhibit art. The first show was in April and May 2023, and there will be another next year.

In the future, we look forward to converting the art into a large endowment for the Center for Global Mormon Studies. This endowment will fund student scholarships, more oral histories and podcasts like those Caroline Kline and her students are pursuing, and many more projects. We are deeply grateful to Mehran Nia for his generosity.



Podcast: “This Global Latter-day Life” with Caroline Kline

“[This Global Latter-day Life](#),” a podcast from the Center for Global Mormon Studies at CGU, debuted in the fall of 2022. The podcast draws from the Claremont oral history collections and features the stories and perspectives of Latter-day Saints from around the world. Half storytelling and half conversation, each episode centers the life story of a global Latter-day Saint followed by a discussion with a scholar or community member about the particular themes that arise in the featured oral history.

I was particularly struck by the story of Aanya, a Church member from India. In the second episode, we learned about her conversion to the Church, her decision to serve a mission, and her determination to find a marriage partner who will support her dreams and aspirations:

“I am a self-dependent [independent] person ... And I want to develop myself a lot in my whole life, and I want to earn money. I want to be a good mother as well. I want to be a good wife and good friend.

“But when I was dating here some guys, they were saying this [type of] thing: ‘Job—no, you have to take care of my family. You have to take care of my mom and dad and family and all things.’ Which is good. Obviously, I will do it. But the thing is, I also want to do a job. I also want to develop my career, my future. It will be good for my husband, it will be [good for the] children as well.”

Aanya has never experienced Church teachings about gender roles as limiting. In fact, she believes the Church encourages every person, male and female, to achieve and to become self-reliant. She feels empowered as a Latter-day Saint woman and is looking to leave behind some traditional expectations that preclude married women from working outside the home. And, thanks to Latter-day Saint online dating sites, Aanya has recently found a partner who shares her vision and passion for self-development. Her fiancée is from Mexico, and the couple plans to marry soon.

Ultimately, Aanya's story gives us a window into the ways Church membership can open up new networks, understandings, and opportunities, helping members to agentively carve out for themselves the lives they wish to lead.

This Global Latter-day Life is available on iTunes, Google Podcasts, and other podcasting apps, as well as on the [Claremont Mormon Studies website](#).

Support the Mormon Studies Program at CGU!

Your generous contributions make a significant difference for the students, faculty, and programs that help us expand the world's understanding of Mormonism. We greatly appreciate your support.

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