

'GO THY WAY' **GLOBAL MORMON STUDIES** **2024 CONFERENCE REPORT**



Aztec Danzante in front of Iztaccíhuatl and Popocatepetl volcanoes
Photo Credit: Alejandro Quiroz

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** Conference theme
- 2** Outline of conference programme
- 3** Conference aims & objectives
- 4** FamilySearch workshop
- 5** Feedback from participants
- 6** Areas of improvement
- 7** GMS 2025 conference
- 8** Acknowledgements

CONFERENCE THEME

As this year the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint's Come Follow Me program studied the Book of Mormon, and our conference would be in Central America, which has traditionally been associated with the history of the Book of Mormon, we wanted to take inspiration for this year's theme from this book of scripture that inspired the term 'Mormonism'. We also wanted it to be a theme that encompassed the idea of reconciliation of peoples, ideas and troubled histories.

We took our inspiration from a scripture verse in 3rd Nephi 12:24:

"Go thy way unto thy brother, and be first reconciled with thy brother, and then come to me with a full purpose of heart, and I will receive you."

With this theme in mind in our call for papers we stated:

Change, adaptability, and peacemaking are characteristics of Mormonism's presence as a global religion and cultural movement. Mormonism has also been a source of historical conflict, trauma, violence, and contradiction. The theme "Go Thy Way," acknowledges the multidimensional reality of what Mormonism's global presence has meant to various communities and individuals. How can these layered and nuanced experiences be seen, represented, and interpreted? Can they be reconciled towards a sense of greater belonging? We invite scholars, researchers, and creators from both inside and outside of Mormon affiliations to share their perspectives on paths of reconciliation in Mormon studies. We call for works that address historically underrepresented, contested, or erased experiences.



Global Mormon Studies
2024 Conference Report



Global Mormon Studies
2024 Conference Report

OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME

Thursday May 23rd

Opening events

Keynote speaker, David Knowlton

Small reception with hors d'oeuvre

Musical performance: Mexican traditional viceroyal-era music

Panel 1A. Mormonism in Mexico

Panel 1B. African Latter-day Saint Autobiography

Panel 2A. Their Own Way: Mormon Literature in Latin America

Panel 2B. Intersection and (un)disciplined: Nuanced identities, community, activism, and our marginalized Mormonisms

Friday May 24th

Family Search Workshop

FamilySearch Presentation

Church History Library Catalog Presentation

Panel: Using FamilySearch in Historical Research

Panel 3A. Transnationalism and Migration in Latin America

Panel 3B. Mormonism in Relation to Other Faiths

Panel 4A. Media and Movements in Brazil

Panel 4B. Cultural, Religious, and Racial Identities

Panel 5A. Mormonism, Colonialism, and Reconciliation,

Panel 5B. Indigenous Perspectives on "Lamantie" Discourses part 1

Panel 6A. Zapatismo, Generalogy, and Mormonism

Panel 6B. Indigenous Perspectives on "Lamantie" Discourses part 2

OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME

Saturday May 25th

Panel 7A. Exploring Latter-day Saint Culture and Identity in Mexico
Panel 7B. The Use of FamilySearch for the Reconstruction of Families and Generalogies in Historical Demography for Research and Teaching
Panel 8A. The Mormon Moment: Looking Back Ten Years Later
Panel 8B. Understanding Religion in Society
Panel 9A. Latin American Lamanite Identity
Panel 9B. Mormon Proselytism and Pioneering in Brazil
Panel 10A. Using FamilySearch in Historical Research
Panel 10B. Church History Library International Research Grants Workshop

Closing Reception

Closing remarks and recognition of host venues
Closing reception with catered hors d'oeuvres
Musical Performance by Yolteotl

Sunday May 26th

Tour, "The Cold Land of the Volcanoes" of key locations related to the history of Mormonism in Mexico

CONFERENCE AIMS & OBJECTIVES



The main objectives of the GMS research network outlined in our constitution include:

- Encouraging scholars to enter the field of global Mormon research, especially emerging scholars, scholars from the Majority World, and scholars whose primary academic field is not Mormon studies
- Supporting regular global seminars and symposia to build a community of scholars and members of the public interested in global Mormon studies
- Developing a multi-lingual space in which scholars work to exchange ideas in the languages in which they can best express themselves

***“This will be a
difficult
conference to
surpass!”***

***-Conference
participant feedback***



To address these objectives our key aims for this conference were:

- Have a conference in Central America
- Provide travel grants
- Provide accessible pathways for engagement for scholars outside of Mormon studies
- Multi-lingual conference

One of the key aims of the Global Mormon Studies research network is to organise our conferences outside of the US, where conferences on Mormon studies are predominantly held. Being in different places brings in different people who aren't always able to travel to the US both due to the cost and due to struggles with acquiring visas. Our previous in-person GMS conferences have been held in Coventry, England and Bordeaux, France. It has been high on our priority list to move away from the West and specifically have a conference in Central America where we could more deeply engage Central and South American scholars with an interest in Mormon studies. In doing so we also aimed to develop good relationships with Central and South American scholars that didn't have a background in Mormon studies, but have language skills and background in regions and cultures that can be applied to the study of Mormonism.

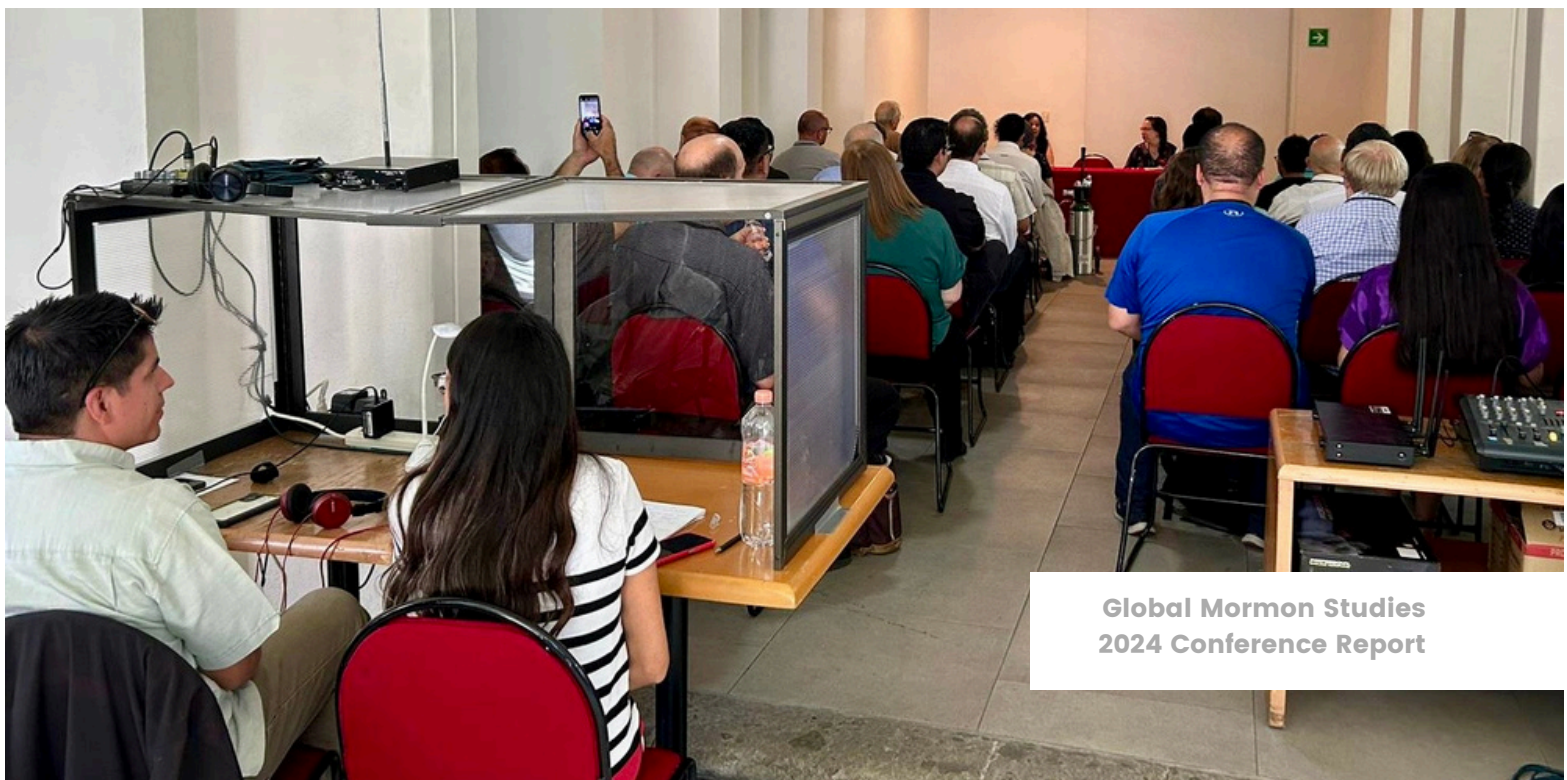
Where possible in planning the conference we adapted to Mexican norms, rather than following a pattern of how US conferences are delivered, for example in making registration for the conference free and how we structured breaks and panel times. At the conference we also celebrated the Mexican culture of our host country in various ways, including through traditional musical performances at our opening and closing receptions. We believe this was a valuable cultural experience for many of the members of the Global Mormon Studies community whose background is not in Central and South American studies.

We encouraged and supported emerging scholars through generous travel grants, made possible by our donors and sponsors. Our priority was to give these travel grants to students and independent scholars. We organised and paid for the flights of 19 presenters. This enabled scholars from countries in Africa and Asia to attend despite the higher cost of flights.

In our selection process we also emphasised Central and South American scholarship. To engage Central American scholars whose primary field is not Mormon studies we had panels where the emphasis was on historical research using FamilySearch, a genealogy tool from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that more and more scholars are using for academic research.

It was particularly important for us to have a multilingual conference, despite the extra planning and work this would take. Not just within global Mormon studies, but in global academic in general linguistic barriers are a key challenge to accessing academic engagement and visibility.

As Melissa Inouye phrased it, this conference aimed to “break the hegemonic barrier of the English language”. Having our conference in Mexico lent itself to us organising the conference in Spanish, Portuguese, and English. We ensured all our communication, forms, and programmes were available in both Spanish and English, and that the call for papers was accessible in Portuguese and presenters could present in Portuguese. At the conference we had 8 panels in Spanish, 6 in English, 4 bilingual Spanish/English and 2 Portuguese. We organised and paid for live translation for all panels and Q&A at the conference.



Global Mormon Studies
2024 Conference Report

FAMILYSEARCH WORKSHOP

As part of our in-person conferences we aim to have an event for the wider public that provides access and awareness of global Mormon studies. There was a great deal of interest in FamilySearch in Mexico so in cooperation with FamilySearch and the Church History Department we organised a FamilySearch workshop. The workshop was especially advertised to students in Mexico City. Separate from the conference itself the workshop had over 100 in attendance.

FamilySearch set up interactive posters and a scanner in the lobby, which people actively engaged in. The manager of FamilySearch in Mexico, Omar Villalobos, introduced FamilySearch, including its history. Rodolfo Derbez, the Institutional Relations Manager at FamilySearch, explained the resources that FamilySearch has to offer historians and academics in Mexico. A presentation was also given on the resources available from the Church History Library Catalogue.

The second half of the workshop consisted of a panel of Latin American scholars discussing how they have used FamilySearch records and tools in their research. For example Carlos Murgueitio, a professor from Columbia, showed how he used FamilySearch to trace his family line to Sephardic jews who had fled the Inquisition. These scholars demonstrated the wide variety of uses and records, such as 16th and 17th century records digitised from the Catholic Church Holy Office, parochial records, tracing music lineages, and family history.

Prior to the conference it had been suggested that certificates of participation would be appreciated. We organised that participants who attended the workshop received a certificate of participation, which was very popular.



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

This is the biggest conference the Global Mormon Studies research network has organised. We are therefore very happy to report that the feedback we received from the conference was extremely positive. For many participants this was their first Global Mormon studies conference, and while some had attended our previous online conference this was their first in-person Global Mormon Studies Conference. For many participants this was their first engagement with global Mormon studies as a field of study.

Many of our participants informed us that they enjoyed the panels, and that the panels topics were very relevant to the interests of the Global Mormon studies community. There was particular praise for several panels that dealt with themes on indigenous perspectives and race, and the panels centered on history of Central and South American Mormon histories. Participants informed us they were impressed with the languages and diversity represented at the conference. The majority of participants reported that they would recommend attending a Global Mormon Studies conference in future.

This feedback demonstrates the conference met many of its aims and objectives, and we look forward to maintaining and developing many of the relationship and networks developed through the conference.

85

Presenters

177

Registered Participants



Global Mormon Studies
2024 Conference Report

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

We always seek to improve how we serve the Global Mormon studies community. When asking conference participants how we could improve future conferences we received feedback on three main points of improvement.



No. 01 – Number of venues

The Mexico City conference events happened across several different venues. There were pros and cons to this, organisations in Mexico were very generous with use of their spaces. The main reason the conference became spread out was because of student strikes, which resulted in moving many of the panels that would originally have all occurred at one central location. This is not a problem we expect to encounter in future in the same way.



No. 02 – Organised networking opportunities

Participants were very happy with the amount of time they had for networking, which we believe is an important component of any conference. However some showed an interest in more organised opportunities for networking, including collective lunches and events where newer scholars are connected with more experienced scholars. We are taking this feedback on board and look forward to organising such opportunities in future.



No. 03 – Communication

Participants who weren't directly involved in panels as presenters or chairs felt there could have been clearer communication about the conference. We aim to improve this in our next conferences. Providing our conference communication in 3 languages did slow down our communication with participants, and we have learned a lot from our experience that we look forward to implementing to provide clearer and timely communication to all participants across multiple languages.

GMS 2025 CONFERENCE

In order to maximise accessibility for the global Mormon studies community we alternate each year between in-person and online conferences. As this year was in person in Mexico next year will be online.

the theme of our 2025 online conference is : **“The Place of Alienation”: Mormonism on the Margins**

In her book *Sacred Struggle*, Melissa Inouye wrote: The place of alienation is familiar. All paths through eternity loop through here, more often than any of us would like... Christ was here. This place is sacred.” The place of alienation and marginalisation is particularly familiar in global Mormon studies. Our research often dwells here.

This manifests in many ways. Within Mormonism some take pride in identifying as a ‘peculiar people’ and emphasise being separate from the world. Mormonism and the wider context of Abrahamic religions has a history of divinely mandated translocation and migration, both born of, and causing, alienation and conflict with other groups. Mormons in global contexts experience marginalisation in communities and cultures, feeling very far from a religious centre in Salt Lake City, and at times culturally at odds with the American roots of Mormonism. Opinions on a variety of subjects such as gender, family structure, LGBTQ, and politics can also cause alienation and marginalisation both within Mormonism and in relation to wider communities.

We welcome papers from across the academic spectrum that address Mormonism on the margins and the place of alienation from global Mormon perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the work and efforts of our founder Melissa Inouye who passed away not long before our conference. Melissa was excited for this conference. In an interview five days before she passed away she said, “It will be a really groundbreaking conference especially because it will involve a number of scholars from Mexico who wouldn’t be able to fly to the United States for a conference held all in English.”

At our conference we presented a short memorial video for Melissa, including a short video by her husband Joseph McMullin. Joseph recorded his comments next to a Chinese Mormon Apricot tree planted in honour of Melissa, representing the long global history of the church. He said, “Melissa would be so pleased to see you in Mexico, discussing these important ideas, celebrating the diversity and complexity of international Mormonism”.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Making our 2024 conference a success took tireless work and dedication from our conference committee. We would like to thank the following:

- Moroni Spencer Hernández de Olarte, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
- Stephanie V. Griswold, Claremont Graduate University and Museum of Mormon Mexican History
- David Bolingbroke, Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Farina King, Department of Native American Studies, University of Oklahoma
- Brittany Romanello, Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow and Arizona State University
- Michelle Graabek, Independent Scholar

We thank our sponsors and donors for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to global Mormon studies.



Contact

**Global Mormon Studies
Research Network**

www.globalmormonstudies.org

Steering Committee:

Michelle Graabek, Chair
Caroline Kline, Treasurer
Julie Allen
Chiung-Hwang Chen
Ignacio Garcia
Daniel Hernandez
Amy Hoyt

**Global Mormon Studies
2024 Conference Report**

GO THY WAY GMS 2024 CONFERENCE



Conference Sponsors & Supporters



CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA



INAH



EL COLEGIO
DE MÉXICO



El Colegio es
conocimiento
ciencia y cultura



Deseret Book



CHURCH HISTORY
LIBRARY



Claremont
Mormon Studies



FamilySearch

**ROBERTO
AVILA**



**JOHANNA
FERNÁNDEZ**
Presidenta H. del SMDIF
Tenango del Aire



**HACIENDA
PANOAYA**



HACIENDA SAN ANDRÉS



Doventos
talentos

