

Episode 83.

Music

Narrator: Thanks for listening to another episode of Project Zion. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts the Restoration offers for today's world. Project Zion is sponsored by the Latter Day Seekers team from Community of Christ.

Music

Good morning! My name is Lachlan MacKay. I really appreciate ya being with us this morning. I am a member of the Council of Twelve in Community of Christ. My field---so we, uh, we have geographic fields---I get the northeast of the United States. And we define that at the moment as Michigan, and then Kirtland to Maine and Virginia; but I also have functional assignments. One of those is Historic Sites. I've spent about 25 years overseeing Community of Christ Historic Sites, and I also am responsible for the---I lead the Church History Team.

So, my path to the Council of Twelves was not, in any way, typical. I've spent my entire life in the 19th Century; and then, I suddenly wake up and I'm in the 21st. And it's been fun. It's, uh, been fascinating. But I get to jump back to the 19th Century today. And we're going to talk a little bit about the Word of Wisdom and intoxicants in Community of Christ, um, which seems kind of a strange topic, but we'll talk about why.

As we have these kinds of discussions, we always frame them in the context of our core values or Enduring Principles; and in this case, we're going to talk about Responsible Choices. So when we have these kinds of discussions, we think about---uh---we look through the lens of Responsible Choices. We understand that God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. We also recognize that some have diminished capacity to make Responsible Choices. We believe that choices contribute to good or evil in the lives---in our lives and in the world. We understand that many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible human choices. We believe that we are called to make Responsible Choices within the circumstances of our lives and to contribute to the purposes of God. So those choices might be environmental; they might be financial; they might be in our personal relationships; they might be related to our personal health. And that's what we're going to spend a little time on today.

So the reason we are talking this at this point in the life of Community of Christ is that our World Conference delegates asked us to talk about it. So we have what we now call World Conferences or General Conferences every three years. We elect delegates that go to represent the place that elects them---the Mission Center or Stake that elects them. And we can put together resolutions---this conference is a week long---and we discuss, debate, argue, pray, um, and end up voting on resolutions. And one that passed in 2013, World Conference Resolution 1300 on the drinking of intoxicants. It rescinded World Conference Resolution 297, which we'll talk about a little later. It was 19th Century talking about drinking intoxicants in saloons. We were pretty strongly opposed to drinking in

saloons. So that's rescinded in 2013, a surprise to, to many of our Community of Christ members, I know. But then "Further resolved that the World Conference requests that the First Presidency give the Church contemporary council regarding the interpretation of Section 152 4b, specifically regarding how the consumption of alcohol pertains to Community of Christ's understandings of sin."

So what that's talking about in 1976, and we'll look at---at it later, our Section 152 talks about the grosser sins of the world and it lists drinking. So these members were saying, "we'd like some clarification on that. Is---is alcohol a sin? We'd like clarification on that." Then "further resolved, that the World Conference requests the First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles review the policy requiring complete abstinence from alcohol consumption by members of the priesthood and confirm and/or revise the policy and administrative guidelines so there's clear understanding of expectations for Priesthood on this issue throughout the church. So as that suggests, there was not clear understanding of our positions by 2013, and we'll talk later about why there was some confusion there. So that's why this topic has come up. We have spent the years since exploring from the---through a number of lenses---this question, and we'll talk about some of those.

So, Joseph Smith on intemperance. This is 1836; his diary. "I was informed today that a man by the name of Clark who was under the influence of ardent spirits froze to death last night near this place," so it's near Kirtland. "How long, O Lord, will this monster intemperance find its victims on the earth?" Little context, by the early 1820's American's drank more than anyone else in the world. On average, 7.5 gallons of distilled spirits a year. Whiskey, 7.5 gallons a year. Christians began embracing temperance as a moral cause by the late 1820s, and the American Temperance Society was created in 1826, and a number of state and local auxiliaries were created. The number exploded. Five thousand of these organizations with 1,250,000 members by 1833 in the U.S. So temperance, this temperance movement, was sweeping the country.

So, what's temperance? Joseph is condemning intemperance. What's temperance? For the longest time, I thought it was abstinence, prohibition. Temperance basically, moderation; it's the opposite of gluttony. So Joseph is in opposition to gluttony and intemperance; he's a fan of moderation. So the northeastern corner of Ohio, where Kirtland is located, was a hotbed of temperance activity; and Kirtland's Temperance Society was formed in 1830.

I'm going to share some information from Christopher Creary's *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences*. Creary is in Kirtland very early. His family is there, one of the earliest settlers, and he's there almost his entire life. And in about, I don't know, 1890, he publishes his memoirs, so *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences*. He talks about Kirtland's distillery, Kirtland's still, established in 1819 by Warren Corning; and the point of a still was to turn corn, which is not easily transportable, especially prior to the canal system. It's a way to get corn into an easily transportable commodity---um--a way to sell your crop and---and--survive on--it's not the frontier--but--a--a way to do that. It also generated yeast for baking, since baking soda not yet widely available. So they thought the still was going to be a blessing, but here's what Creary says: "From being a blessing as was hoped, the Still House became an unmitigated curse. It became a resort for a score or more of hard drinkers

holding high and sometimes pugilistic carnival, while some of their families at home were suffering for the necessities of life." That phrase, necessities of life, means adequate food, clothing, and shelter in the early 19th Century. He continues, "Of the half dozen or more men that operated the still during its existence of 13 or 14 years, three of them died from effects of occupation and excessive use of whiskey. A young man left the still one night, loaded a little too heavy. He lay down for nap and when he was found, his feet and legs to his knees were frozen. By taking the frost out with cold water, I believe his legs were saved, although in a crippled condition. An old gentleman from a neighboring town brought his jug to the still, had it filled, and started for home. He got up to the neighbor to visit where Mr. Sleeman," so that's south Kirtland, "was, went into the bushes, lay down, and died." So that's happening around us in 1830s Kirtland. Creary runs through---Creary had the Account Book, the Day Book, for the still, and he runs through how much people are spending, and then he talks about when they first opened and when they close, so, the book is dated December 1 of '31, the particular account book he has, that virtually closed by February 1 of '33. Again he talks about how some of the folks were spending almost everything they had at the still, um, on average, maybe a pint of whiskey per person; so instead of feeding their families, they were buying whiskey, is Creary's point.

So he then turns to the Temperance Society, which he has also apparently the minutes of the Temperance Society, (I'd love to track 'em down), 239 signatures, the first meeting in this Minute Book, 6 October of 1830. So that's when they get started. They vote not to sell any of their grain to a distillery.

But I'm going to jump back now to Harmony, Pennsylvania. This is Section 26, LDS Section 27, August or September of 1830. So "Behold, I say unto you that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when you partake of the Sacrament, that so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory..." I'm going to jump to verse d, "wherefore a commandment I give unto to that you shall not purchase wine neither strong drink of your enemies, wherefore ye shall partake of none except it is made new among you, yea, and this my Father's Kingdom which shall be built up on the earth." So that's happening back in Harmony.

Again, jump back to Kirtland. By 1833 the owner died; the members of the Temperance Society get together, pool their resources, purchase the still for the purpose of shutting it down. And they do. At least they were ethical about. They didn't storm it and burn it. Um, so this is not prohibition, so they weren't really doing as--much of that kind of damaging, uh, maybe some places, but... ummm, this is fun: the Temperance---this is again Creary---"The Temperance Society met quite often and were addressed by able speakers. The names of those mentioned in the records were" and he runs through them, "Dr. Graham." So I don't know yet, is this THE Dr. Graham? Dr. Graham didn't invent Graham Crackers, but he had a--a health--um--philosophy, and that philosophy informed the creation of Graham Crackers, so, vegetarianism, being thoughtful about eating. So, I need to do more work there and find out what Dr. Graham, if it's THE Dr. Graham, and I'm pretty sure it is, what is he saying while he's in Kirtland?

Within a month of the Temperance Society's closing of the distillery, Joseph Smith, Jr. brought the Word of Wisdom to the Church. "A revelation for the benefit of the Saints" and etc, "and a Word of Wisdom for the benefit of the Church and also the Saints in Zion, to be sent by greeting, not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, given for a principle with promise adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints who are or can be called saints."

So let's look at the Word of Wisdom a little bit. Again, February of '33, "inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling together to offer up your sacraments before him. Behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine of your own make"---so we have many Community of Christ---well, we have---Community of Christ congregations today, I wouldn't say many any more, that have vineyards, the members do, specifically to grow grapes and make Communion wine, Sacrament wine. Uh, So, "Behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine of your own make and again, strong drinks are not for the belly but for the washing of your bodies. And again tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and it is not good for man but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle and to be used with judgment and skill."

So what's strong drink? I always thought it was alcohol. Does that make sense? That's NOT what they understood strong drink to be in the 1830s. That's not the definition of strong drink. Strong drink was distilled spirits. It's whiskey; it's rum. That is strong drink. So strong drink is not good and is not for the belly, but is rather for the washing of your bodies. Does anybody know what that is referring to? Endowment, as understood in 1830s Kirtland, so it's an earlier understanding, this idea that you can be empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit can rest on you, and then you will go out into the world on your mission. Part of that, they did a ritual cleansing with cinnamon whiskey and perfumed water. That's the strong drink reference. Cinnamon whiskey; perfumed water. Then they would go into the third floor of Kirtland Temple, anoint the head with oil, do a sealing work, sealing meaning, um, like so many words, the definition changes depending when you are using it in our history. So, a confirming blessing, um, then they did some feet washing downstairs, and then they would go into the world on their missions.

Why whiskey instead of just water? Because the Word of Wisdom says to use strong drink. They didn't know this, but how often do you think people bathed? So, it--it would have, um, an antiseptic quality. So they were---they were spiritually preparing, physically preparing, physically um, you know, clean clothes, clean bodies, clean hearts, before they would go into the Temple. So the comment that this might be a Temple text, and so there is some reason to believe that as they start some of these things earlier in K Whitney's store, um, there's gonna what would become Temple theology there. But it's a, a different kind of Temple theology; and, really, it begins at Isaac Morley's farm in 1831. And, um, this idea of being endowed with power from on high; and we're talking about being endowed in 1831 at the Morley Farm.

So, basically, prohibition against, um, distilled spirits, strong drink, they always made an exception for medicinal use; um, so, uh, that was not uncommon to---to---if you were feeling ill, um, they would allow strong drink for medicinal use.

Wine: "only to be drunk in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before Him, and should be pure wine of the grape of the vine of your own make." So Kirtland Temple dedication, March 27 of 1836, they are using red currant wine, courtesy of the Whitney family. Pure wine. There was significant struggles with adulteration of wine and of--of strong drink at the time. So when they talk about pure wine, they are concerned about adulteration, people putting all kinds of silly stuff in it.

What about water? Water, of course, was acceptable, but not at all common. Ummm, couldn't drink it back then; but if you didn't have enough money for wine, it was acceptable. Ummm, and today in Community of Christ, we often have some cups of water in with the grape juice. So despite the Word of Wisdom saying "use wine," we use grape juice in Community of Christ and call it wine, but also often have cups of water for dietary reasons.

About "new wine." That doesn't mean unfermented. It's not until 1869 that a Methodist lay minister by the name of Welch...Welch's? ...adapts pasteurization to grape juice. So, prior to that, you only had a very brief window in any given year when unfermented wine was an option.

Your "sacrament offerings." Well, they seemed to consider "sacramental" not just the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but weddings, the sacrament of marriage. So it would be not uncommon at a wedding feast to have wine and cakes

Again "hot drinks are not for the body or belly." It's not surprising to me that hot drinks is referenced. They believed at the time that hot or cold would throw off your internal workings. So what's kinda surprising to me is that it only references hot drinks and that it doesn't reference cold drinks. But they discourage or, or---moderation when it comes to hot drinks. That does not mean that they didn't drink coffee or tea. The Smith family drank coffee and tea in moderation. The Red Brick Store Day Book, of course, they're selling coffee and tea. That even continued, of course, into the West.

Continuing, "and again verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man, every herb in the season thereof and every fruit in the season thereof. All these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of fowls of the air, I the Lord hath ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving. Nevertheless, they are to be used sparingly, and it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used only in times of winter or of cold or famine." So, we have a family in Nauvoo that never served meat between Easter and Thanksgiving because of this. And, as a child, we do lots of camps and family camps, and my greatest fear as a child was that I would have Word of Wisdom cook. All this healthy food. My greatest fear as an adult is that I won't have a Word of Wisdom cook.

"All grain is good for the food of man as also the fruit of the vine that which yieldeth fruit whether in the ground or above the ground, nevertheless, wheat for man and corn for the ox and oats for the horse and rye for the fowls and for swine and for all beasts of the field, and barley for useful animals and mild drinks and also other grains." So what's "mild barley drinks?" Beer. So, mild barley drinks understood to be good.

So what's strong drink? They understood it as distilled spirits. When does the Word of Wisdom say we should drink wine? For your sacrament offerings. Let me be clear: we do not do that in Community of Christ.

What does "offer up your sacraments" mean? Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and, it seems, at least at times, marriage--the sacrament of marriage.

What's tobacco for? Bruises and cattle and sick cows.

What does the Word of Wisdom say about putting cream in your coffee? It doesn't.

How about herbs and fruit? Good for the body.

Um, should we eat meat? Sparingly, and in the winter.

So these general understandings, strong drink is discouraged; wine and beer in moderation seem to have carried over into the Reorganization. We need to do more work on that though.

So a few examples. Emma Smith to Joseph Smith III, December of 1867, she's talking about their two vineyards. She's remarried. Louis Bidemon is her new husband. They have a couple of plots of grapes. She says, "I think we had some of the largest clusters and the largest berries on them that I ever saw and we used them freely. We--all we wanted had made pies by the section, canned a few, made some jelly, put up box to be opened when you come to Conference, put up another box to keep til Alex" (which is another of the Smith boys) "come home, sold one or two hundred, and then made over 300 gallons of wine and a cask of vinegar. Pa Bidemon would not have made any wine if he could have sold the grapes as he did last year, but he could only get from five to seven cents a pound." And then in 1868, Emma writes to Joseph III talking about how they're trying to sell the wine to--to feed themselves, to--to survive on.

General Conference Resolutions. So we're going to jump back to kinda the official positions of the church. This is 1868 "that this Conference deprecates" or disapproves of, "the use of intoxicating drinks as beverages and the use of tobacco and recommends that all officers of the Church, to all officers of the Church, total abstinence." So it's recommending abstinence to officers of the Church, um, and it's saying that we don't approve of. But is that an outright ban? It's not.

So, Joseph III goes to Washington D.C. with Elder Gurley, another of our Church leaders, and he bumps into Colonel Alan Campbell. This is 1881, approximately. Campbell is contesting

George Q. Cannon's seat in the House of Reps. Um, and they're talking to the Colonel, and he invites them---it's lunchtime---he invites Joseph III and Elder Gurley to the bar to have a glass of wine. And Joseph III says, "No thanks, but I don't do that." When I first read that, I thought, "Oh, he doesn't drink wine." But he continues. Here's what he says. Now Gurley takes up the invitation, and he goes with the Colonel. And then he comes back. This is Joseph III, "I had always exercised my right of personal liberty by refraining from drinking at a bar or in a saloon. I do not know that Elder Gurley drank with the Colonel; but when they returned, he seemed to smile and twinkle as though he had tasted something good and was feeling the touch of good fellowship which attended. I found no fault with the Colonel or with Brother Gurley." Yeah, when I first read it, I thought that means he doesn't drink at all; but when I read it further, it seems to me he's saying I don't drink in a bar or saloon. And I don't think in any way that suggests that he was not temperate. In fact, he was a--a leading temperance lecturer in the 1880s. So Joseph III was all about temperance, which is not prohibition.

Next one, General Conference Resolution, 1881, Number 235. "That this Conference discourage the use of tobacco and of strong drinks as a beverage by the Church and especially by the ministry." So, again, it's not prohibition, but it's encouraging the abstinence. Boy, this keeps coming up again and again and again. (laughter) You'd think we have better things to talk about.

1885. "Inasmuch as some of the member of this church are in the habit of visiting saloons and drinking intoxicants, which habit seems to hinder the spread of the work, therefore, be it resolved that it be made a test of fellowship for any member of this church who will persist in this practice." So this is big; 'cause suddenly we've gone to a test of fellowship; and it's not just leaders, priesthood; it's membership. So what is it saying is the test of fellowship? Yeah, drinking in saloons. But we begin to understand this and continued to understand it for a long time to mean drinking, not drinking in saloons.

What's so bad about saloons at the time? They apparently, at least we believed they were awful places filled with the dregs of society. I don't know if that's true or not, but--but we--we felt like they were very dangerous, unhealthy places, kinda like some people think about, what's it? maybe like a banker bar today, I don't know.

So at this point in time, the Temperance Movement is firing up again, and we are about to have a General Conference in Kirtland Temple. This one 1887, and we invited leading temperance lecturers to address us. So it's--it's firing up again. What I'm not clear on---initially in the 1830s, temperance was not prohibition, but then the Temperance Parties began to take sides, and some started to push for prohibition, and that caused the Temperance Movement to fall apart. So what I don't know is, temperance at this point is this still temperance or does it become or start to move towards abstinence prohibition, I don't know.

So 1887, we have this General Conference in Kirtland Temple; um, and Joseph III brings what becomes Section 119 of our Doctrine and Covenants. And it says, among other things, "avoid the use of tobacco and be not addicted to strong drink in any form, that your counsel

to be temperate may be made effectual by your example." So what's it saying? Is it prohibition? Be not addicted.

1888 - "Whereas the Lord has spoken against the use of tobacco and strong drink on different occasions and whereas in all our appointments, we ought to show respect unto said Counsel, therefore resolved that henceforth we recommend no man for General Conference Appointment" (meaning full-time ministry with the Church), "we recommend no man for General Conference Appointment whom we know to be addicted to either of the above evils, and that this decision take effect one year from date." I think that's fascinating. No addiction and we're going to give people a year to---to---cut the---yeah---to---um, to---to treat their addiction. Um, so, I--I--I'm not saying this means we recognized addiction as an illness in 1888, but I think it's kind of a thoughtful position.

1892 - "Whereas the Quorum of the Twelve deem it was wisdom to appoint none as Church missionaries who do not honor the Lord in avoiding the use of tobacco, etc. as enjoined in the revelation of April 1887 and whereas Branch and especially District Presidents are important Church servants, therefore be it resolved that we do respectfully call the attention of all saints to the propriety of observing the example of the Twelve and appointing such officers, especially where others equally competent are available that do thus honor the Lord." So, it's now kinda extending down not just to general leaders, general officers, but congregational leaders.

So what's being constrained is addiction. Remember this refers to 1883 addiction reference. Still going. "Whereas the Lord has spoken against the use of tobacco and strong drinks on different occasion, whereas in all our appointments, we ought to show respect unto said counsel, therefore resolved that henceforth we recommend no man for General Conference Appointment whom we know to be addicted to either of the above evils."

Jump back to some personal examples. This is a fun one. Joseph Smith III, writing to his son Israel A. Smith, who would later become our Prophet/President, as his father was. Kind of a long letter, but it's fun. "1899. Thursday, week ago yesterday, there were exercises at the College" (this is Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa) "in the forenoon, which was very good, by the Athenians" (I think that's one of their clubs). "When the train came in from St. Joseph, a keg of beer was dropped off. Billed it--it said to Rob Grenowalt. He asked W. B. Kelly to help him carry it up, and he would give him a glass of beer. So the two toted the beer up," (meaning to the old bakery and oven building formerly occupied by Bill Bradley). Here by wink and nod and whispers, some 14 of the boys including" (and he runs through the names of the young men involved) "...others to the number of 14 gathered. By some means, Dusnip and Bishop Kelly got wind of the gathering, and they gathered, too. They caught some of the boys and captured some beer; but the most hid in the garret, and one in two in the oven (laughing). Well it raised a breeze in the old town and has made much talk. It may not be such an awful crime to drink a glass of beer now and then, but to obtain the stuff and to gather in such a snooping way and in such company is disgusting. I was glad you were not here; not that I think that you would have been in the proposed carousal, but I had the trouble of tracing down one charge of beer handling and guzzling



made against you about two years ago or so, and I was glad there was no possibility of this--you being in this one at this time." Ahhh, the joys of parenthood.

This one is undated. Joseph III writing to a cousin, E. D. C. Smith. "Control your temper so far as possible. Don't consort with the saloon element. It is the poorest sort of humanity, but don't waste your energies over a drink of beer taken in an unguarded time. There are worse things than that.

I think it's a great question and I don't have an answer, but maybe we can work together on that..

1913, again, probably leading up to prohibition, we adopt a resolution prohibiting fermented wine for sacrament. So that tells us that until 1913 that that was an option and that likely some were doing it, and that there was an argument about it. That's why it comes up at the General Conference. So the resolution "that fermented wine should not be used in the sacrament services of the Church, but that either unfermented wine or water should be used and so be in harmony with the spirit of the revelations." We reaffirm the Word of Wisdom in 1936 as the basic health program of the church.

Now, here's another critical moment. This one is 1976, W. Wallace Smith, so this the post-Vietnam era, and I'm guessing that that's what impacts this. Section 152, 4b, "Some have been led to inactivity, yea, and even lulled to sleep by the spirit of carelessness and indifference. Some have been overcome by the grosser sins of the world, the spirit of revelry, wanton living, use of drugs, drinking, and fornication, and have fallen away." So this is the section that prompted the question in 2013 "what is our position? Is--is alcohol a sin? Or is abusing alcohol the sin? or abusing others while under the influence of alcohol a sin?" Clearly the latter two, yes.

2005. Priesthood Standards and Qualifications. So this the Church Administrator's Handbook. It's available to anyone, but almost no one but Pastors or Presiding Elders get it. I mean, it's a--it's--it's available. They just don't bother to get it. But here's what it says. "The Church's general policy regarding priesthood members' drinking intoxicants is found in the question posed by---for consideration of priesthood calling. Does the candidate exhibit good stewardship of health and high standards of behavior, avoiding the abuse of chemical substances and refraining from the use of alcohol and tobacco?" So when our members say "where is the prohibition on?---there is a prohibition on priesthood consuming intoxicants at this point in the life of Community of Christ. And this is where it's found. But it's not particularly clear, is it? We don't have a---a list of statements saying here's what you can do and here's what you can't. It's just kinda this general understanding that you can't based on this statement, probably referring to 152. So, it's just not abundantly clear.

To make it worse, the Priesthood Manual, which every Priesthood member gets, and is widely available, says something different. This is 2004. "Addiction---" It refers to the addiction to the use of alcoholic beverages as grounds for not approving a priesthood call or for removing priesthood authority. So we have one significant policy manual saying

priesthood members can't consume intoxicants, but not saying it clearly; and then this one saying you should avoid addiction.

So that is what led to the confusion among our members which led to the 2013 World Conference Resolution back to the beginning. And this is what we will respond to in the not-too-distant future. And we're doing that by gathering together leading health professionals that are members of our faith: doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists to talk about the latest literature regarding intoxicants and health benefits regarding addiction. We are called as a people to protect the most vulnerable, and we are always mindful of that as we have these discussions. What would it mean for somebody who might be struggling with addiction--um--to--to see--uh--a member of the priesthood having a glass of wine with dinner. Would that be difficult? Perhaps. What about children who might see somebody they know from Church having a glass of wine with dinner? Would that---um--um--not be protecting the most vulnerable? Those are the discussions we're having.

We also, of course, are reviewing---what do the scriptures say about alcohol? Do they declare it to be sinful, or not? Um, we're looking, um, and talking cross-culturally. So, this seems in some cultures to be a really straight-forward issue. In other cultures it's also straight forward on the opposite side. Um, and so we are engaging many voices from around the world in this discussion. And finally, we're reviewing the historical record, um, and through that--um--and---um---in this process of discussion, it's taken us about four years. We hope, in the not-to-distant future to have---uhhh---a statement about where Community of Christ is today. So, again, a really difficult issue for us, but viewed through the lens of Responsible Choices.

So, I think it's clear that where our churches are today on intoxicants is not necessarily where we have been in the past and not necessarily where we started. Who's a priesthood holder and why do they have different rules? We're, um, asking the rule question ourselves. So, in Community of Christ, um, the way it works is in a congregation there would be a need for more of a particular ministry. So, for example, if a congregation is having some internal conflicts, then perhaps there's a need for Teachers. And Teachers---uh--uh--the priesthood office of Teacher focuses on reconciliation. So people are squabbling, a Teacher would help them work through those differences. So the leaders of the congregation would go in prayer and hope that through inspiration somebody was called. They would then approach that individual---um--and they would have a year to accept or reject the call--um--to--to hope for some confirmation. Um, I--for example, I rejected my first call to Elder. I just didn't feel comfortable. And then I got a call to Teacher, and---and I loved it! I loved being a Teacher. And I---and some day I'm going to go back to being a Teacher---um--because I love the idea of helping people get along.

And the [garbled] Priests are family ministers; Deacons make sure the church is clean and warm and ready to worship in; Elders are the spiritual leaders of the congregation; High Priests are the administrators. So, I'm going to guess, and this figure might be outdated, but about 10% of our membership, both male and female, might be priesthood holders.

So we are having the discussion, why---why would we set a different standard for---um---priesthood, from member, from disciple? Ummm, and I'm not sure that we will, in the future. But it's pretty clear that we have for most of the time in the past. Usually Member had a different understanding than Priesthood, which, even in some cases had a different understanding than General Officer, umm--so--um---it'll be interesting to see where we land on that question.

It's been a privilege. I hope if you can stay for lunch, I'd love to keep talking, umm, and, thank you very, very, very much for being with us today.

(Music)

The views expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Latter-Day Seekers team or of Community of Christ. The music has been provided by Ben Howington. You can find his music at [mormonguitar.com](http://mormonguitar.com).

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