

Intro Music:	00:16	[inaudible].
Josh Mangelson:	00:17	Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.
Intro Music:	00:32	[inaudible]
Brittany:	00:33	Hello everyone, and welcome to another episode of Project Zion podcast. This is Brittany Mangelson, and I will be your host for today. And I'm really excited about the conversation that we are going to have. We have on Jeff Naylor, who is a member of the Presiding Bishopric, who lives in Herndon, Virginia. And we just hopped on Zoom together on this chilly afternoon. Actually, I don't know if it's chilly where you are, Jeff, but it's chilly where I am,
Jeff Naylor:	00:59	It's not too bad.
Brittany:	00:59	Good! And we are gonna talk about stewardship and generosity and this idea of whole life stewardship and what that looks like in the life of the church and in the life of disciples. So Jeff, I'm really excited to have you on. Why don't you just introduce yourself a little bit.
Jeff Naylor:	01:22	Sure. So thanks Brittany for having me. Project Zion podcasts, listening to those and looking forward to those. I hope I can measure up to the, to the standards that you all have set. They're pretty cool and glad that everybody joined in. I joined the Presiding Bishopric at the last World Conference. I actually work as a volunteer in that role. My day job is in Washington DC. I work for a trade association for the U S mutual fund industry called the investment Company Institute. I work on behalf of shareholders and advocating for policies and procedures that are beneficial to the investing public. So very much a service oriented work that is really informed a lot by my volunteer work for the church. I'm married to Susan. Susan is actually pretty well known to the church in that she is a, one of the directors of World Conference and has been a previous director of Spectacular so she's actually known to generations of church members and uh, I always get stopped and people say, Oh you're Susan's husband or are you any relation to Susan?
Jeff Naylor:	02:35	So very proud of that, have two kids. My daughter lives in the St Louis, Missouri area and is just a first year first grade teacher. And my son Eric is a junior here in Oakton high school in

Oakton, Virginia. And is going through that process of gearing up for what does post high school life look like for, and we're having a lot of fun with that.

Brittany: [03:02](#) Awesome. Thank you so much for that. I'm glad that you lifted up that you are a volunteer member of the Presiding Bishopric because that's honestly one reason why I wanted to get you on to talk about this topic-whole life stewardship and generosity because you donating your time and talent and testimony to this position is really, really significant. And so I personally, before we dive in, just want to thank you for that because I think that it models such a good, a good, sustainable model for us to work into the future of what does it look like to hold ministry and a vocation outside of the church and do both with everything you've got.

Jeff Naylor: [03:45](#) Yeah. I'm not going to lie, the balance sometimes gets a little precarious and sometimes you, you catch yourself coming and going. But you know, when you believe in, you know, I believe in my vocation. I believe in the organization I work for and the work that I do that I'm paid for. But I also believe very passionately in the mission of the church, the ministries of Jesus Christ, and how can I best use the gifts and talents that I've been given and share those on behalf and with the church. And I think it's very apparent to me that so many of us give in so many unique and different ways and God needs those gifts and the church needs those gifts. Whether you are hosting Project Zion podcasts as an employee or serving as a co-pastor in a congregation as I know that you do as a volunteer or in the very many ways that we interact in the life of the church.

Jeff Naylor: [04:52](#) You know, I've had a lot of volunteer roles where I've constantly had to balance, you know, work life and family life and everything like that. We all do that. But this notion of whole life stewardship means that we first and foremost are a disciple of Jesus Christ. And as a disciple of Jesus Christ, we say, we buy into the notion that we are about kingdom building. And that doesn't mean we're about kingdom building from 10 o'clock till noon on a Sunday morning or that we're about kingdom building from seven to nine o'clock on a Wednesday night or once a month when we go to, we might go to a soup kitchen. Certainly all of those things are important, but it's the time in between that. How were we investing our time? How are we spending our energies? What are we doing to develop our skills? What is it that we're doing with our money to align our lives in ways that God's presence in our life and God's influence in our world can flourish?

Brittany: [05:58](#) I absolutely love the way that you worded that. And I must admit, when I first came to Community of Christ. I came in 2015, or actually 14, so it was kind of in the midst of this financial turmoil that we are still climbing out of. And it was an interesting time to come into the church because I was super jazzed about everything that was happening, everything I was learning. And yet there was kind of this cloud of, of sadness and uncertainty that the church was walking through. And that was when I first encountered this phrase, whole life stewardship. And to be honest, I had no idea what anybody was talking about. That's not how tithing or generosity or church service had ever been articulated to me. And so for others who might not be familiar with that, I mean you kind of already said it, but is there like a succinct way that if somebody just said, what are you talking about when you say whole life stewardship? What would be your elevator version of what exactly you're talking about?

Jeff Naylor: [07:04](#) So whole life stewardship. Basically if you, if you look at the components of that, you first have to understand that what stewardship means. Stewardship means that we manage things, but we don't own them. So if you think about it in terms of a guardian for a child, so somebody who's appointed to help take care of, oversee, raise, but they don't own that child. And I always go to movie analogies. So Bruce Wayne, when his parents die before he becomes Batman, Alfred would serve as his guardian and Alfred looked out for his every, every wellbeing. If you look at an organization, board of directors of an organization, they don't own the company, but yet they make sure that the company is operated ethically, that it's operated to the benefit of its owners. So that you have to look at the notion of stewardship is to manage, not own.

Jeff Naylor: [08:04](#) And then the concept of whole life stewardship actually comes out of discipleship. Because if you look at President Veazey talked about and presented to the church, he linked stewardship to discipleship. And in a number of sections of the Doctrine and Covenants 162:7c talks about the interdependence of discipleship and stewardship. And so if we accept that relationship, essentially what it says is we're called into deep, authentic relationship with Christ as disciples. That means that we are called into deep, authentic relationship with those things that have been given to us to manage. So whole life stewardship basically says everything in our life that has been touched by God's grace and God's generosity to us is given to us to manage and it's untapped potential. And so we had decisions to make with our time, our talent, our treasure, our testimony. How do we share that?

- Jeff Naylor: [09:13](#) So the notion of whole life stewardship basically says, and that's why you have to peel back the layers. Because if you don't, if you don't believe in those kind of those relationships, you never get to truly understand what does whole life stewardship mean? Whole life stewardship means essentially everything I have is God's everything I have. I have an opportunity to manage for God's benefit and I can manage those directly for God's benefit. Meaning I give of my time, I give up my tithing to the church, etc. Or I manage what I keep in a way that grows my capacity, that prepares me for the future so that I can be more generous and more giving and more available to the church. Whole life stewardship requires us to move into that question, what does it mean to align our lives in every way, to be that best expression of Christ-like discipleship?
- Brittany: [10:17](#) I'm so into this cause it sounds so transformative. It's a completely different way to interact with the world, to interact with the people around you, your resources, what you bring into your home, what you take out of it. I mean, when you really get down to it, and like you said, peel back that definition of stewardship and this understanding that everything we have has been given to us and does, and that it should further God's mission and God's dream for the world. I mean, that's, that's, this is big stuff. I mean, it's not just crossing off the envelope and putting it in the offering tray, you know.
- Jeff Naylor: [10:54](#) Yeah. And, and certainly there's a reverence that comes from the discipline of doing that. I mean, discipleship in and of itself has it's root: discipline. And so it's the idea that when we take action, our actions are intentional. It's not discretionary. It's not, you know, just kind of willy nilly, if you will, that we fought through this. And God wants us to think through it. God wants us to think through every aspect of our life so that we make a decision, be that decision of how to spend our money or how do we spend our time how do we, how do we serve you know, in every aspect we ask the question, you know, and the cliché, what would Jesus do? Well, Jesus may not, you know, have to decide whether to use a smartphone and play a game for 30 minutes or to spend time reflecting and through their seminary book.
- Jeff Naylor: [11:55](#) But what would Jesus do is an important question for us to ask to say, how do we better equip ourselves to be the disciple of Jesus? And you know what the answer sometimes is we play the game on our phone for 30 minutes. And that's important because we need to have balance in our life and we have to have moments where we unplug and maybe we do something that is totally unstructured, you know, computer games or video

games on the phone. It's a big content and bone of contention with my son because he loves the game. He's a gamer and we get in conflict sometimes on that. But there's also something that comes from that experience is that sometimes when you feel like your life is totally out of control, when you totally blow that round of candy crush out of the, you know, out of the water, there's something about that sense of accomplishment that says, okay, life is really going to be all right. And now that I've done that, I can set that aside and now I can roll up my sleeves and write that paper for seminary, or go to that online class for my computer programming degree, that, or my GED or I can actually sit down and put together Sunday mornings worship service. So we taught, a lot of times we talk about God's stuff in these very pious or very almost unrealistic or ungrounded, ethereal concepts. Sometimes God is found in candy crush. And that's okay.

Brittany:

[13:38](#)

I really appreciate hearing you say that because I know that sometimes, especially in my generation, I feel like, I mean, we would, we call it like hustling or whatever, you know, just like moving from the next thing to the next thing and trying to be so productive and it eats ourselves. We eat ourselves alive, trying to be overly productive, like we're not doing enough and then we don't feel accomplished. And it's kind of this cycle. But in whole life stewardship, I, I would assume that it's really easy to feel overwhelmed by all of that, but to just stop and give yourself grace and say, okay, I don't have to live with one outfit or I don't have to know in order to be giving, you can you can find that balance and you can put volunteerism aside for a moment and play Candy Crush and it's going to be okay.

Jeff Naylor:

[14:30](#)

Exactly right. You know, it's it's amazing. Some of the pressure that we put on ourselves to be, to be disciples. Certainly there's an accountability that we should hold ourselves to. But there's a reason that we read about laughter and joy and singing and celebration in the Bible is life is to be lived and, and it has to be lived in a, in a very holistic way. And so there's a time and place for, for everything in life and whole life stewardship basically says yes and it acknowledges that, but it says, where is that place for you and how do you intentionally make time for those things that are most important for you, for your family, for your congregation, for the volunteer work that you may do outside the church, but is that, is congruent with the you know, the mission of the church, your profession. Those roles that you play. And most importantly, how do we take time to recharge our batteries so that we can continue to run that marathon a life and still have energy and not feel like we're just constantly fatigued, worn down, and, and less effective.

Brittany: [15:44](#) Exactly. Thank you so much for all those thoughts. They're really, really helpful and I think a good way to start this conversation. So one other definition that I want to kind of get out of the way when we talk about this topic is generosity because I feel like stewardship and generosity sometimes are interchanged and I don't know if that's appropriate and I, I just want to make sure that we're clear on what we talk about as we move forward.

Jeff Naylor: [16:09](#) Sure. So we talk about stewardship. Stewardship is actually the process that we, that we use to look at life. It's a lens that we use to look at life and it's about managing the things that are within our purview. When you look at generosity, the, there's not a specific order to the Enduring Principles. Although if you talk to bishops, we say that grace and generosity is number one. And it's because it's the most extravagant gift that we're given. And it's kind of a, here's another, a movie analogy. It's like the force from Star Wars, grace and generosity surrounds us. It's there in good times. It's there in normal times and it's there in bad times. You know, at the time of this recording just a week and a half ago, The Bahamas was devastated by a hurricane Dorian. And we continue to hear some of the harrowing stories and the tragedies of that.

Jeff Naylor: [17:16](#) But even in those moments of tragedy, we continue to hear of stories of people working together to support one another, to provide encouragement, digging people out of wreckage and, and, and homes, sustaining people, supporting one another in ways that remind us that even in life's most horrific circumstances, when we look God's presence, God's grace, God's generosity surrounds us and we don't earn it. It's never withdrawn from us. It's always there. And it's up to us to put, put ourselves into a mindset, into a perspective where we can recognize it and to be open to receive it. And once we receive God's grace and generosity, what we recognize is it's the ultimate extravagance because it never ends. It's forever with us. And the moment that you have that understanding, you recognize that there's always going to be enough and to spare. It may not be to those same quantity that we want to have.

Jeff Naylor: [18:44](#) It may not be we may not all be going out and buying \$80 million mansions. We may not all be going out and buying sport teams, sports teams which are societies measures of success. But what we recognize is that we can have a roof over our head. We can make our homes open and available to our neighbors. We can give financially to our church. We can save money so our kids can prepare to go to college and, and set them off on good footing. We can align our life in a way that we've, we've

become better prepared so that we can teach the Sunday school class to the fourth, fifth and sixth graders in elementary school. So that when they have an understanding of what it means to be a disciple, they can make an informed decision about whether they want to enter the waters of baptism.

Jeff Naylor: [19:45](#)

There's just so many things to do when we understand that all that we have is given to us from God and it, and it will be continued to give to us, uh, given to us as long as we're open to receive it. So the generosity is, it's all the we all that we receive. And then we haven't talked about the giving part yet, but it's all that we receive. And then if you overlay stewardship with that, it's how do we manage all that we have and it's all God's. And so how do we manage it in a way that would be congruent with how God would want us to manage that? God doesn't want us to live in austerity. God wants us to live comfortably. God does not want us to live ostentatiously that God wants us to be able to take the resources that we have if we're looking at financial resources and be able to use them to provide for ourselves, but also to be able to share those with others.

Jeff Naylor: [20:44](#)

And so generosity comes our life, grace and generosity through God. And then we, as we align with God and God's purposes, it's an extension from us. It flows through us. The church in the 1990s introduced the concept of a forgiving heart and that was a way that they would, the church tried to help us understand this, kind of, this growing under this understanding of generosity. And what I'd like to just ask everybody do to do right now is to open your hand and kind of look at it. Palm up and then close your fist and then think about water being poured on that fist. You know, are you going to be able to drink? The answer's no, you won't. But if you would open that hand up and you pour water again, it forms a cup and so that you are able to drink.

Jeff Naylor: [21:44](#)

But if you keep pouring that water as soon, fairly soon, what's going to happen is that cup is gonna overflow. And sometimes we need that water and sometimes we don't. And so what happens is if we cup the hand when we need it and we drink, that's great, but then let's extend the hand, turn it sideways and allow the pitcher to fall and it continues to flow and it flows beyond us. So we take what we need and we make available to others what we don't. And this notion of our heart, the forgiving heart, F, O, R, space, G, I, V, I, N, G. So before giving heart is one that is, that heart is open. It allows God's grace and generosity to flow through it and it comes into us as what we need. And then it flows out. We have that imagery in the church, in the Temple as well. We flow into the Temple to receive blessing, to

worship, to revitalize, to educate and that, and then we are challenged to leave through the, through the stained glassed field is white and ready to harvest into the mission field. It's that notion that we receive and then we give. And that's ultimately, that's what generosity is about. Generosity is being open to receive, but we then take that and allow that to transform ourselves so that we're open to give.

Brittany: [23:24](#)

I really appreciate that imagery. As you were talking, I did it myself. I clenched my fists and opened it. Uh, and I think that that visual is, is actually really helpful. I think of my resources, my time, talent, testimony, treasure, all of those things. And I think about I can further the mission of the church, which I do believe is Christ mission. That's a really helpful imagery for me. So Jeff, I kind of have to laugh. I have the outline up right now and I'm realizing, and people in my congregation will think this is funny too probably, but I realized that I asked you how do we express generosity? And then I noted time, talent, testimony, and then I said anything else. And I forgot treasure.

Jeff Naylor: [24:13](#)

It's okay!

Brittany: [24:16](#)

I say that people in my congregation will laugh because whenever I am charged to do the offering or disciples generous response, I'm pretty honest about how in past times I have felt very, very, very jaded and compelled and obligated to pay tithing. To give my treasure and it's been to the detriment of my family before and I didn't necessarily believe in the institution that I was giving money to. And so it's been, it's been something that I've really had to work through. So I just had to laugh looking at this outline and seeing that treasure was the one that I left off.

Jeff Naylor: [24:53](#)

That's okay. You did it too to confess to the group. You did say anything else. So you did, you, you left the notion that there is something tickling in the back of your brain and in this case maybe treasurer would be one of those things tickling in the back of your brain.

Brittany: [25:11](#)

Well, I will say it was unintended.

Jeff Naylor: [25:14](#)

No, that's all right. So, so thinking about that question, you know, let's, let's talk about it. You know, because we always, when we think about this stuff, we, we are really drawn to the finance stuff. And that gets really, you know, people always say, all bishops talk about is money and it's like, well, you know what? We talk about money because money is really important. So I will talk about money in responding to, to your question,

but let's talk about the other stuff first. So as a whole life steward, you ask yourself the question, how do you invest your time as a disciple and look to the Enduring Principles of the church to help answer those questions. How do I become a blessing of community in my workplace, in my neighborhood and my congregation? What can I do to understand and promote diversity in the communities of my life?

Jeff Naylor: [26:12](#)

Can I take 30 minutes in a day to unplug and refresh, but make a responsible choice to spend that same amount of time in reading and reflection or spiritual practice? Or perhaps it's spiritual practice that is your way that you unplug and refresh. You know, looking at talent, I include education as part of our talent. So is a GED or community college, seminary technical school or something else in your future, can you volunteer your services someplace? I know a tax preparer who could make a ton of money during, in the United States, January to April, that's our tax filing season. They volunteer one day a week with their community center. And what they do is they sit down with people who can't afford professional tax preparation and they help consult with people, to help them answer their questions at their time of need. And they just volunteer their services.

Jeff Naylor: [27:10](#)

I mean, that's an incredible way. How many of us were musicians as children, we may have played or piano. We may have, uh, the, you know, a clarinet played the drums saying, how many of us have allowed some rust to settle in on those skills and talents? Could we knock a bit of rust off those fingers are off our vocal chords and provide ministry at church in that way. Can you help organize a congregational yard sale? We have one of those in Washington DC ours is coming up at the end of September and it does every year. And we have a church member who dedicates probably weeks worth of time to raise funds for a local homeless shelter through a community yard sale. But that yard sale has become a way for us to connect with the rest of the community around us.

Jeff Naylor: [28:09](#)

People know they can bring their things to the yard sale. People come to the yard sale and shop it. We actually have people that will come and eat with us and will actually volunteer with us that are not members of the congregation because of that yard sale. And it's all because this person who has an organizational talent saw an intersection of a need with their talent and brought that to bare in the life of the congregation. Are you an artist that can sell artwork and perhaps donate the proceeds to Bridge of Hope. Sorry, I had to get the plug in there.

Brittany: [28:43](#)

Plug it away!

- Jeff Naylor: [28:43](#) So you know, and then many people have a powerful story. We hear the word testimony and it causes so many of us to freeze up, but what is testimony? Testimony, his story and everybody has a story. Kids love to hear stories.
- Jeff Naylor: [29:02](#) They love stories told to them. There's some people that they, they, they wouldn't give their testimony to save their soul, but if you ask them to tell a story about their life, there'll be right up front at church on Sunday or Wednesday or, or whenever being a part of that, you asked me earlier about my elevator pitch on generosity and and that, have you worked on your elevator pitch, your 30 testimony as to why you're a disciple of Jesus and why you express your discipleship through Community of Christ. Our testimony is often expressed through our deeds. People see your authenticity and generosity of spirit and they want to know more about what makes us tick. I recently as part of the world church leadership council, one of the things that Bishop Cramm has asked me to do is to help familiarize the council on tithing trends and things that are happening and doing some analysis on that.
- Jeff Naylor: [29:59](#) And I presented some information to a subset of the world church leadership council. I titled my presentation A Generous People- We Just Need More of Them. You know, how can you better extend invitation to others to become part of that, that fascinating journey that we have as a faithful people as we strive to do our part, to build the peaceable kingdom, including to be stewards that help fund the mission of the church? Uh, so here we come. Here's, here's the money stuff, you know but you can't talk about whole life stewardship without talking about money. We are grateful for all that we've been given and we are called to align our finances with our priorities of discipleship. I think I've, I've said this in other ways, you know, we're not asked to be living on bread and water if we have additional financial means beyond that level.
- Jeff Naylor: [30:55](#) God's not saying you have to give up on, on all of that, but we are being asked and called to responsibly determine what we need maximizing capacity to share with the church and other worthy organizations who support is vital to carrying out Christ's mission. It's about balance and making responsible choices about spending, use of debt and appropriate savings for the future. So all of those things, you know, kind of come together to express whole life stewardship. You have to look at them and, and you understand you can't look at them separately. You can't look at money separate from how you spend your time. You can't look at how, how your story has

unfolded and look at that separately from your talents because they're intertwined. They all intermix.

Brittany: [31:42](#) And ultimately that message is what my disciples, generous responses and worship usually come down to is that even though I have a complicated history with church and giving and all these things, I know that at this point in my life I've been deeply blessed and transformed by Community of Christ. And because of the generosity of others. I'm very, very mindful of the generosity of multiple people and of an entire community that has brought me to where I'm at today. And so I feel how could I not respond to that? How can I not invite others? How could I not financially give because I am here because others have financially given. And it's this whole transformative rotating circle that just goes and goes and goes. And it's, when I think about whole life stewardship and generosity through that lens, I'm much more calm about putting money in the offering tray or saying yes to another assignment or saying yes to another volunteer opportunity. Because I recognize that I have been given a lot through this community. And so therefore I want to be part of it and to help build it and help it grow.

Jeff Naylor: [32:59](#) Yeah. And being, and being in a place to understand what your, your true capacity is in that regard is so important. You know, somebody asks you to do something else. Can I do it to the level that it needs to be done? Can I, can I be successful in that way or am I just gonna say yes to get somebody off my back or because I feel guilty and I need to do more. And yet I have five other conflicts that are really going to get in the way for me doing that really well. And so it truly is the, the notion of whole life stewardship is, is an awareness of what is our capacity and operating and functioning within that. Not overextending ourselves but doing it so that we can give first fruits and everything that we do.

Brittany: [33:52](#) Yeah, that's really, really important. So, Jeff, I, and this next question could really be its own podcast so we can brush through it really quickly, but I know that Community of Christ has not always articulated and talked about giving of time, talent, testimony, and treasure in this way. So can you give us just a general understanding of how it has been taught in the past?

Jeff Naylor: [34:20](#) Sure, sure. So, I'm not going to go all the way back, but I would say it was probably fairly, a fair characteristic through and I would say until the funding of the temple that we were pretty stringent on the law of tithing and tithing was defined as 10% of increase. And I know for some folks that word increase is

a disruptive to your ears because you're used to it as 10% of income. Increase acknowledges and it's the first crack at the fact that maybe something bubbling under the surface and God's grace is a play because increase says there are certain basic expenses that someone needs in order to live. They need to be able to have the four walls around them. They need to put food in their, on their table, they need to pay for their utilities, et cetera, et cetera.

Jeff Naylor: [35:21](#)

And so it was increase. But with that you have a law that you tell people that they have to give 10%, and then you give them the loophole. And so what was my, based on my income and needs and what was somebody else's increase based on their needs and their income were two entirely different things, even if our circumstances were remarkably similar. And so there was all, and then there was always this tension that there was accountability. We had to fill out tithing statements and we sent tithing statements in to our, at that time our Bishop's agent that worked in, in the congregation. And ultimately those ended up at world church. And it was, it was one of those things you know, that it was very, it was law heavy and you know, quite honestly it was some would say, now if I was talking to my dad, my dad would say, well, it's just the way things worked and, and that's what you do, you know, but my dad's, and he wouldn't mind me saying this.

Jeff Naylor: [36:32](#)

He, he's going to be 88 years old on this coming Sunday. So he comes from a generation that follows the law in that way. I'm at the very end of baby boomers and I have a lot of that gen X rebellion in me. And it's kinda like, who am I going to tell? Well, I'm not going to tell you that you know, this, that's between me and God. And and when we funded the Temple as a church in the 1980s into the 1990s, the construction of the temple was fully funded because people had been saving for that and been sacrificing for that. And we gave in that way. And I mentioned the forgiving heart, that concept emerged out of the Temple fundraising and the initiatives, uh, for that. And at that time, so in the, probably the early to mid 1990s, the inklings of a disciple's generous response began bubbling in the life of the church.

Jeff Naylor: [37:33](#)

And disciples should response really in the, the late nineties, early two thousands. So this century really has been the driver and it is still talked about if you look at the Choose Generosity book that the Presiding Bishopric wrote, and I must add a disclaimer. I was not part of the presiding Bishopric when that book was written, but it's fabulous. So the work that that was done with Bishop Cram Bishop Graffeo, Bishop McGrath,

working with other folks, read the book, get the book from Herald House, can't promote it enough, but it talks about disciples, generous response in there. And a lot of those concepts we've already talked about. You know, we first receive God's gifts, so God's grace pours down upon us and we need to be, uh, as we recognize that, we respond faithfully out of that with our own generous giving. We align our heart and money.

Jeff Naylor: [38:30](#) You know, that's, that's an important principle. That's principle number three of the disciples, generous response. And then the more practical aspects of principles four through six, we share generously, we save wisely and we spend responsibly and notice the order that those are given. We share generously, we save wisely, and we spend responsibly. Sharing generously first, because that comes out of the notion that everything is God's and we give our first fruits to God. And so that really begins to introduce this notion of grace. And then that has continued to evolve and emerge into the definition of tithing that we adopted in 2016.

Brittany: [39:15](#) So I guess moving right along, can you tell us that definition? I must say being at that conference and being a delegate and being part of that process was one of the most fascinating experiences of my life.

Jeff Naylor: [39:28](#) Yeah. Yeah. So, so the resolution number is 1314. If you want to look at it on the church's website, you could read about what the, what the World Conference adopted. And that includes the notion that stewardship is whole life response to God's grace and the ministry of Jesus Christ. That in a nutshell is the elevator pitch for whole life. stewardship. Stewardship is whole life response to God's grace and the ministry of Jesus Christ. And that statement, we live our lives as a response to what God gives and what we receive. Our response is what brings Christ mission alive and keeps it unfolding. So it's not static. I mean when people love continuing revelation, we believe that the in the propheticness of not only a prophet, but of our people. And so Christ's mission continues to unfold before our eyes. President Veazey had a, uh, was asked to describe in a very brief way the S the understanding on tithing. He indicated that it creates an understanding of tithing that moves us from the letter of the law to the spirit of the law of giving to our true capacity.

Jeff Naylor: [40:55](#) So if you start with that notion in the 19, you know, that will in the early days of the church leading up to the kind of the construction of the Temple that we were strictly law based. And then we kind of, we walked a little bit through the desert to

figure out what does it mean to truly become principles based with regard to our stewardship. If you look at the 2016 resolution that was passed that truly does place us in squarely in that area that says we're going to follow this spirit of the law of tithing that says that essentially we are to respond to the grace and generosity that surrounds us to give to our true capacity.

Brittany: [41:39](#)

I think that that is a fascinating way to look at tidying and generosity because it's, Hmm, how do I want to say this? It's harder in some ways because we're not just, okay, this is our budget line bill and we're just gonna do it every month and not think about it and whatever. I mean, we're being asked to think about our true capacity, which is difficult. So do you have any practical tips? Like how do you decide what your true capacity is?

Jeff Naylor: [42:10](#)

So, I'm going to suggest a couple of resources to people and I've already promoted. One of them is, which is the Choose Generosity book because I think that that really helps us kind of orient ourselves in the, the current story of the, of generosity and of response at responding from a whole life perspective. It's very helpful. It's framed in the context of the tithing definition that was adopted by the 2016 conference. But if you really want to spend some time, if you're more of the mystic and you'd like to spend more of that time in spiritual formation, and I, when I say that I, I'm please, I'm not disparaging mystics, it's just that we all encounter God in different ways and some encounter God in ways that really focus on aspects of spiritual formation. Some, it's an academic pursuit, et cetera.

Jeff Naylor: [43:08](#)

But there is a resource that is available on the church's website. It's called Pathway to Abundant Generosity. And what it is, is it's a 14 day spiritual journey towards understanding better understanding God's abundant generosity. It illustrates facets of how our whole life come to bear on understanding the extravagant grace that is extended to each one of us in how we can generously receive that and prepare ourselves to be more generous. And it's that conscious awareness, Brittany, that is really important as we look for our true capacity. Let me share a story with you and it's a recent one and I don't, and I don't share this with you to toot my own horn, it's just, it's kinda how sometimes we allow the little things in life get to get in our way. And sometimes there's something that will jar our brains that allow us to see things differently.

Jeff Naylor: [44:17](#)

And all of a sudden we recognize a future that we could never, that we didn't imagine before. So here in Washington DC

they've been doing significant reconstruction of the public transportation system and I commute about 25 miles a day and I was riding the train, you know, 25 miles in or 15 miles in. It was driving 10 miles and then riding the train 15 miles in. And then, you know, doing the reverse. And when that was being worked on, I actually switched and I started driving to work every day because it was more predictable. I was having, the commute was excessive and you know, all sorts of problems. But when I started driving I realized I'm paying a toll on a toll road both directions. I'm paying more for gas. I actually paid more for parking cause I was parking the car at my, at my office as opposed to parking my car at the Metro station. I was putting wear and tear on my car and, but yet I had changed my behavior and that's how I got to work. How do you get to work? I drive. There's convenience with it. You know, I walked down in the garage, I climb in my car, it's climate controlled. I drive on the roads, I get out of my car. It's climate control and you know, it's in that way.

Jeff Naylor: [45:42](#)

But our family, we've been looking for ways, how can we increase our giving to the church because we are committed to the church. We see the tithing trends look on the website for the latest update on tithing as of July. You know, we're down about, well, we're down a significant amount. I won't, I won't give you an exact percentage just because that dates the podcast, but I, I think I can probably say that at least for, we're going to be down a significant amount whenever you look at it, but we're looking for more ways that we could contribute more to help support the church. And what I realized is if I switched back to go in on public transportation, I was going to free up about \$350 a month in our budget from the tide's, from the, from wear and tear on the car. But more importantly, as a disciple, that's, that's called to care for the planet.

Jeff Naylor: [46:35](#)

I'm going to pollute less. I'm going to put less congestion on roads. I'm going to allow my car to last longer so I don't have to replace it as quickly. So I don't have to use those resources. It's very intense resource consumption to build a new car. So I look at those things. And not to mention, I mean I think some of you no who I am or have seen pictures of me. I can use every opportunity to walk to, to work on my weight as possible. So, you know, there's additional exercise for me. I look at all this stuff. It's like making this change.

Jeff Naylor: [47:11](#)

I was, I was positively giddy when I was submitting the paperwork to my human resources department to make this switch because I recognized it was just all the way around. It was better. And, and the important thing was I was aligning my

life, my practices in my life to be more like Gods, more like how I was called to be it, live my life as a disciple. And what was the benefit from that? It gave us opportunity to make choices to be more generous in our response to the church. And so you put all that together and to me that's part of what it, what does it mean to look for true capacity? We have to be aware of everything that we have around us and we have to be consciously making decisions about how we spend our time and grow our talent.

Jeff Naylor: [48:07](#)

We offer our testimony and share our treasurer to bring about Christ's mission. So we do that as individuals and families, but congregations also do that. There's a thing called the Generosity Cycle. It's a new approach to looking at congregational response to towards budget and towards funding the mission of the church. There's an intentional experience of invitation that helps us discover how tithing can support local and global mission. There's resources that help with study, worship, and spiritual formation, and through those resources, congregations discern and discover their collective capacity to respond through intentional tithing, commitment. And then there's time to reflect on that, to express gratitude and to celebrate the local and global mission that's responsible based on people's response. So true capacity is, is multifaceted, but it's all in the fact that it's intentionality and it all comes out from the notion that you first have to start with the idea that I have gifts and talents that I've been given to manage. I have a choice in how I manage those.

Jeff Naylor: [49:26](#)

God seems to give me a way to understand that I should manage those in ways that align with God because everything I receive comes from God. And so how do I maximize my ability to bless God through my management of those resources, be the resources I directly share with others? It my financial, my time, my talent, my testimony, my story or is it how I manage the resources that I choose to keep that help equip me for the future. Me, my family, my congregation, the church. And so you look at that and through that process, little sparks of inspiration come about. So that true capacity is understood and is grown.

Brittany: [50:19](#)

Wow! I really, really appreciate that. I love how you gave a real life example from your own life of something seemingly small, but the impact of it in the ripples that it had are huge and a really meaningful in multi, in a multidimensional way in your life. So Jeff, just to wrap up really quick, I want to know your thoughts. I guess kind of in twofold about whether you think the model of true capacity is enough to sustain the church and then

wrapped up in that, I want to know your hopes for Community of Christ as we're going forward.

Jeff Naylor:

[50:53](#)

Okay, so is the model enough? Absolutely, but we have to be faithful to seeking out and to as you, you used the term earlier, kind of setting things on autopilot. Set it and forget it type thing. Our capacity changes over lifetime or lifetimes. It ebbs and flows. It's kind of like the oceans. That's why I think of it a lot of times there's a time, there are times that the tide comes in and we should use those times as a as blessed and that they prepare us for future times when we're at low tide. But even at times of low tide, you see treasures on the ocean floor that you might miss otherwise. And that's what we're called to do, to recognize God's grace and generosity and the good and not so good times of our lives. Because grace and generosity abounds around us, regardless of where we are in our life, we own our response.

Jeff Naylor:

[51:54](#)

We own it. That is one thing we do own. We get to make the choice and we can choose to draw away and pull apart or we can come together in the spirit of rhombi strengthening the community for the journey that lies ahead. And I'm excited about the future that we face because we face it together. And that in and of itself sustains me. I think my greatest hope for the church is that we don't waste this time, a financially, as we find ourselves in the financial desert. As I, as I spend time with church members and visiting with church leaders and, and that one of the excitements that I used to hear expressed when we first came out of World Conferences, gosh, looks these conversations that, that, that the presiding Bishop Rick has asked us to have about mission and about the use of a, of property, uh, be that real estate or investment accounts, et cetera.

Jeff Naylor:

[53:04](#)

Uh, and, and how those are being used, how those are being deployed for mission. We're going to be really awkward and difficult conversations. Guess what we're finding out? They are, they're really awkward and really difficult conversations. But what I'm finding people say is it was the adversity that caused us the impetus to have the conversation. But the conversations that we've needed to have for a long time and because of those conversations we are being blessed beyond measure. We are finding new ways to express the gospel. We are finding new ways to be the church. How exciting is that? I mean we're part, we're birthing something new and we're, and you know, you don't often get to be part of that, but yet we're seeing it unfold before our eyes and, and that came about in part because we're facing some uncertainty or adversity, headwinds, whatever words you want to hear.

- Jeff Naylor: [54:06](#) I think we have to, we have to trust in the spirit. We have to trust where we're being led and we have to understand that as we continue to try to be at, to adhere to what we believe to be the leadings of the spirit and discern where God is leading us, we'll be blessed in that process. We may not understand right now how that blessing will occur, but we will be blessed in the process. I have a friend who recently went through a divorce and I shared that process from afar with his family and how devastating it was and how it ripped apart a family, how sad it was, how all the, all of those bad emotions, they're two years removed from that process now.
- Jeff Naylor: [55:06](#) Both he and his ex wife are remarried. They are both in healthy loving relationships. They have children from both, from all different perspectives that are forming a blended family, but children who are loved, children who live in environments where there is not tension that they were experiencing before. In the moment of that, uh, of that family quote unquote unraveling, it was really hard to see the blessing that was going to come from that. In retrospect, we see the potential for that family, for those people, for those disciples to be so much greater. In many respects, we've seen some of that unraveling and some of that and that, that challenge as a church.
- Jeff Naylor: [56:01](#) But we can also see pointers that are leading us into a direction that lets us know that someday we will be at the promised land and that's what's exciting.
- Brittany: [56:13](#) Thank you so much. I have really appreciated our time together and this conversation was exactly what I was hoping that it would be. And I know that I have been given new insights and made more connections and that I would even go as far to say is healed a little bit on this topic. Uh, because again, I confessed that it's a difficult one for me. And so again, I just want to thank you. This has been great and I want to continue to have the conversation about generosity and stewardship in general on Project Zion because I think that it's something that a lot of people struggle with or don't know how to talk about and really I think that's what it comes down to is we don't know how to talk about it.
- Jeff Naylor: [56:52](#) Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for the chance to, to visit and it's a topic that's near and dear to my heart. Happy to visit with you anytime. I guess I would just challenge the listeners is be like Brittany. Live into the discomfort challenge some of the, some of your notions. I'm on it and pray and discern and reflect and look for the blessings of generosity that surround your life. Because when you start looking for them, you'll start seeing

them and then you never stop seeing them. And when that happens, you recognize that the God that you profess is not just some theoretical notion that you read about in a textbook or in a Bible, but your God is living, breathing. It's energy itself that surrounds us and is leading the church and is leading people into deeper relationships with one another and deeper relationships with the Christ. And that's what this is all about. That's what we're all about. We are companions on the journey and it's an opportunity for us to embrace, uh, that grace that we've been given in amplify it through our lives and share it with others.

Brittany: [58:26](#) Thank you so much Jeff. This has just been great and really, really helpful for me and I know for our listeners, so thank you.

Outro Music: [58:40](#) [inaudible]

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