

Intro Music : [00:00:16](#) [inaudible].

Josh Mangelson : [00:00:17](#) Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Linda Booth: [00:00:34](#) Welcome friends to the second podcast of Coffee Buzz. When you think of the word buzz, you might think of gossiping or a beew sound, "buzzzzz". The Coffee Buzz podcast doesn't feature gossip or honeybees buzzing coffee, buzz features and intimate conversation with a member of Community of Christ. First Presidency, the first Coffee Buzz featured president Stassi Cramm. I'm Linda Booth, retired apostle and host of Coffee Buzz. Today I'm talking with President Scott Murphy, a counselor to President and Prophet Steve Veazey and he's also director of field ministries. Welcome friend.

Scott Murphy: [00:01:16](#) It's good to be here.

Linda Booth: [00:01:17](#) It's good to see you. I also hear that you and your wife Sandra, have a new grand baby, a little girl. And after you've raised two sons and had a grandson, how's it feel to have a granddaughter?

Scott Murphy: [00:01:33](#) It's pretty amazing! We had the privilege of going out to Seattle where our youngest son and daughter in law live and, and spend time with them and privileged to meet Linen and then, and that's okay. Yeah, we thought so too. But yeah, she was three months old at the time, so it was, yeah. Pretty amazing.

Linda Booth: [00:01:54](#) Well, I'm very jealous because we, my husband Doug and I have raised three sons and half, three grandsons and it doesn't look like there are any granddaughters in the future. So congratulate.

Scott Murphy: [00:02:04](#) Well thank you. I know Sandra is excited about it too.

Linda Booth: [00:02:07](#) I'm sure she is. Well, let's just begin this conversation. Your leadership trajectory has been primarily focused on mission as you've served in a variety of roles such as Mission Center President and Council of 12 Apostle member and President of the Council of 12 and of course director of field ministries. Since the 2013 World Conference, you've served as a counselor to the president of the church as well as continued your leadership as director of field ministries. How have these missional roles and other ministry assignments prepared you to serve in the First Presidency?

Scott Murphy: [00:02:52](#) I've been very fortunate to experience a variety of different ways to serve the life of the church, which was never part of my plan. When I, when I wrestled for two and a half years in my previous career as a principal and that sense of urging and call to serve full time in the church, and at that time I could have never envisioned where my journey has taken me., but it has over the years the 18 years now that I've been working full time for the church and full time ministry, the, the variety of experiences and, and assignments that I have served in have, have been incredible. And each one has taken me further and deeper in an understanding of, of the life of the church, the mission of the church and how the church continues to find its place in the midst of culture and that. So in that regard, I'm, I'm grateful for that that variety and the experiences that have continued to form and develop me. But as I have, even in this moment, as I think about the question while those experiences have helped broaden my awareness that as I serve in the Presidency, I'm not sure that I came into the Presidency fully prepared. Cause it doesn't take long to realize that no one ever comes in fully prepared to serve in the Presidency because of just the, the depth and complexity of what it means to serve in that, that kind of responsibility. And so I would, I would clearly say that I am continuing on a learning trajectory. And every day are new opportunities and things that I face that I haven't experienced before. So it, I never get bored in that regard.

Scott Murphy: [00:05:13](#) But I do think that, especially in my privilege of the time that I was able to serve in the Council 12 and, and then serving us the director of field ministries, which is a privilege to be able to work in a really a wonderful partnership with each member of the Council at 12 and to have that experience in and broader understanding of how the church gets experienced and lived out in different cultures and nations around the world. That has been a deep enrich experience that helps me in, in that role in the Presidency.

Linda Booth: [00:05:53](#) Yes, absolutely. Yes.

Scott Murphy: [00:05:55](#) And especially as you know, when the Presidency on a regular basis, when we sit around the table and I always bring into that conversation, updates about what's happening, that I can talk and share from that, that broader global perspective that really enriches, again, the conversations that that we have.

Linda Booth: [00:06:19](#) Well, absolutely Scott, because you have every, every person in leadership. I think you are the person that's best equipped to think comprehensively of the mission of the church throughout the world. Not only because you've traveled to many nations

and had that opportunity to participate in and observe, but you've worked with those apostles whose mission throughout the world. And so that has given you a comprehensive, I think, understanding of some of the missional challenges and opportunities in many nations. So I'd liked to talk and explore those challenges and opportunities. And first I'd like to focus on Christ mission as articulated in the mission initiatives in the Western nations, in the Western cultures. And more and more we hear church members, I'm assuming that you hear this too, because I, that's what I used to hear all the time, was that congregations are getting older and grayer and there's fewer or no children and young adults on church on Sunday morning and the congregations are shrinking. And in some cases they're going away and some complain that there are fewer people working harder just to keep their traditional church going. So what are some of the struggles that you identified as you traveled to mission centers in congregations in Western nations, nations like Australia and Canada and Western Europe and the United States and the British Isles?

Scott Murphy:

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Yeah, there is no question that the church in the Western context is, is definitely changing. And as I travel around, and even a few weeks ago when I was up in mission center working with priesthood, having a weekend of honest conversation about mission, we cannot deny that things are in decline. I struggle when I hear statements that the church is dying because that's not my experience, the churches in transition. But that transition is resulting in the number of individuals who participate in the normal or standard form of church that we encounter on Sunday mornings. So I think that if, if there's a critical message that we have to continue to acknowledge, it's, it's being able to hear that and in name it and not feel guilty or feel like a failure. Because the reality is, is you, and I know Linda, this isn't something unique to Community of Christ.

Scott Murphy:

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Every Christian denomination, nondenominational organization, institution is facing this kind of changing cultural dynamic. And so it raises that, that question for us. How do we continue to be the church in the midst of the changing culture that is before us? Because if, again, if people are reading articles and things in the paper and, and listening to other podcasts and things like that, there is not a losing of desire for spiritual connection. People are, are not participating in the life of the church, but they are still as much, deeply yearning for an authentic, meaningful relation connection with, with God. Unfortunately, the standard forms of church just aren't creating those kind of sacred spaces for people. And so there is this yearning and searching that's going on. And so as I travel

around and have conversations with members, with leaders, it's, it's clear that there are some cultures that are further along on that trend.

Scott Murphy:

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So when you go over into Western Europe, you go into Australia, you go into Canada, they are further along in that decline. Matter of fact, I read one statistic that in Europe that a major denomination in that area was losing almost a million members a year. It was, it's that dramatic. In the US read statistics that on an annual basis there, there are several thousand churches, congregations that are closing their doors. So in that regard, in those changes, we find ourselves wrestling with the, the big question of what does it begin to look like to be the church in a culture that has, has, is not finding a way of connecting and finding meaning in participating in the standard kind of traditional Sunday morning experiences? So those, that simple question in itself is sometimes just overwhelming because for hundreds of years that has been the norm of what Christianity and the church has been. And so for all of us in leadership, we have been formed by that model. And so even ourselves as we wrestle with that filling a, a sense of loss with what's happening and yet recognizing that there is something compelling that continues to call us forward. I had an amazing experience couple months ago when I was traveling in another nation and attended a, a retreat that was designed for reaching out to the unchurched. And when I attended and the retreat was about, was focused on creating, creating connections and attending this experience. There were, there were 50 people at this retreat, maybe a third of them were Community of Christ members who are supportive but trying to work at creating other opportunities for people to find connections in community.

Scott Murphy:

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But the rest of them were non Community of Christ members and, and half of them were there for the very first time as strangers. But seeing the announcements and the postings on Facebook and other things decided to show up because of their own yearning for finding meaningful connections. But through this experience as a part of a small group that I was with and on the final time of our small group sharing together that we had done periodically through the weekend on that Sunday morning, we were talking together and, and one of the individuals asked me what I did in the church and slow I, I shared with them in an afterwards, the response was, you have no idea how incredible the, the incredible things that Community of Christ is doing. Because that weekend was talking about our enduring principles, our mission initiatives, and in those speak to people in ways that go beyond institutionalism

but speak to the very heart of what means to come together and and this individual in many others there that we can, we're finding this amazing encounter as a result of who Community of Christ is trying to be in.

Scott Murphy:

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Yet some of them coming from different faith traditions, some coming from a non Christian traditions and yet finding this sacred place to be in meaningful relationships that you and I know that we call Zion. And so those moments remind me that as I indicated earlier, the churches and dying, it's, it's just trying to find a new way of being meaningful and authentic in a changing culture. And yet at the same time, the core identity of who we are as a faith community can get experienced and lived out beyond what we normally experience on Sunday mornings. So those kind of experiences that I have encountered as I have traveled around continue to remind me of the importance of the work that we're doing. But this is disruptive work because what it means is that all of the energies in focus that we put in to doing church on Sunday mornings needs to find a release and a capacity to be available, to explore other ways to create opportunities to come together that will not look like the Sunday morning.

Scott Murphy:

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And as I shared with the priesthood when I was at this retreat, the reality for me is that we can no longer use the metric of Sunday mornings defining of our success or not. That's having to change. And it, when we can free ourselves from that and begin to open and, and spend time in the discernment process, I think that we will begin to experience some incredible ways the church finds itself reforming that creates a sacredness for how people can come together, share together, be connected together, but it will look different and most likely not necessarily be on a Sunday eat in that regard too. So those are some of the things that is, as I acknowledged, the challenges as we continue as a Counsel of 12 and the Presidency. This is, as you know from your time serving as President, the Council 12 this is at the very heart of our conversations. We are, we are trying to understand and trying to discern where God is calling us and creating those pathways for new expressions of the church to emerge.

Linda Booth:

[00:18:12](#)

Yes. And there are aha moments because I know you're told me about that priesthood retreat, the aha moment of the gentleman who said, Oh my goodness. Yeah. I think something is being born in our midst that's different than traditional church. Yeah. You want to share what you that that happened that, so I was actually having this conversation that we have to stop using Sunday mornings as a indicator of our success or not

because it's in decline and so it doesn't feel very successful. And in the midst of that conversation about how people come together, it was this moment that this pastor stood up and he says, I just realized that our church for us is happening on Wednesday in what they call hot dog church, where they, they invite the community, the neighborhood around them to come and they serve hot dogs every Wednesday and have meals together.

Scott Murphy:

[00:19:14](#)

They do activities and lessons for the kids. And, and again, people are coming to, they'd been doing this for for multiple years now and this pastor realize that there's actually more people participating in the life of the church on Wednesday than there is on Sunday morning. And it was this moment to say, Oh, I, I recognize at church for us is happening more on Wednesday than it is on Sunday morning. And the permission to say that's, that's incredible. Because we somehow have just been locked in that real church happens on Sunday. And, and I've had is, you know, you've had the same conversations talk about mission and people say, yeah, we do this activity. And I was at, I was at a reunion having this conversation. And again, having a really calm, serious conversation about mission and this one individual talking about what was happening in their congregation on Wednesdays that they started on once a month, inviting seniors in the community could come together.

Scott Murphy:

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And people enjoyed it so much that it ended up, they come in together every Wednesday, they share together and relationships and meal and in prayer in invested in people's lives. And but he says, but we can't get them to come to Sunday mornings. And when I said to him in the midst of this class, so why is it that can't recognize that being as church as much as Sunday morning? And his physical reaction was a, he just fell back into his chair and he says, I don't know. And so I, I chuckle at that because it was such a honest expression of where we really find ourself that somehow Sunday mornings is valuable and meaningful as they have been to the church over hundreds of years for the Christian Church. But even, you know, for Community of Christ since our inception, but the postmodern world that we are moving into that will not continue to be what defines success. And so I love these moments that, that people's opportunities to, to envision and see the church in a different way and being lived out in a different way. When that happens, it just opens up a whole nother way of exploration and encounter being the church.

Linda Booth:

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Yes it does. And it's exciting when those aha moments occur when they recognize that the building of authentic community

isn't just for Sunday morning, it's for all every day as, as we participate in the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. And it can happen on a street corner. It can happen in a grocery store and wonderful things can occur from that encounter and that, that relationship that's built.

Scott Murphy:

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Yeah. You know, and I think that one of the other difficult realities that we have to understand, and this is where I have the, in being in my travels around the church, I can compare and contrast between the Western world and in the non Western world in this regard. But in the Western world, life is a complex. People's lives are busy and filled with multiple things. And, and, and that's not to indicate being bad or wrong or what people are doing is, is wrong. People are just busy and seeking meaning in that. But what's happened is that we go back generations to when we can look at and remember the vibrancy of the church on Sunday mornings when our congregations were filled, but the reality was that church was at the center of culture at that time. Social life revolved in many ways around the church.

Scott Murphy:

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And so what happened on Sunday mornings wasn't, was an outcome of all of the other relational dynamics that were occurring in other ways as people's lives were invested with each other and nurturing each other. And so coming together on Sunday mornings was just a, an outcome of that celebration. But as you and I know and as a lot of people recognize, the churches really now shifted out and and barely at times hanging onto the peripheral edge of society and culture and church now at least in in the Western part of the world, gets really about an hour, maybe an hour and a half of time. And if you stop to think about it, our modes of worship do not create space for people to be engaged in each other's lives. It's, it's calm, we, we sing together, we hear a message, we, we touch base, say hi, how's the family and all that. And then we're kind of out the doors because sometimes we want to get to the restaurants before they, they fill up for lunch. And I don't mean that to be sarcastic or demeaning, but there has clearly been a loss of that kind of relational dynamic occurring in the life of congregations. And that has an impact.

Scott Murphy:

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I compare that to when I travel around to other nations. I mean, when I'm going to, I go into Africa as, you know, just coming back from Africa and your trip. I mean, it's nothing for them to come together for three, four, five hours to share together. And they worship and they share together. They eat together, they, they celebrate together. They're invested in each other's lives in a way that you just don't get when you come together for an hour once a week. So I think that, that, that dynamic continues

to be a challenge on, on how we think about church, how we think about how we create those, those ways of coming together to in relational dynamics and in the kind of questions that that causes us to have to wrestle with.

Linda Booth:

[00:25:56](#)

You brought up one cultural dynamic. And that's postmodernism where generations who have been raised with technology have a skepticism towards institutions, especially religion where they don't believe in a truth, but that we each have our own truth and it's good to explore and to understand each other's truths and they learn differently. And, and, and it's not making a judgment, but those who've been raised with computers and laptops and Gameboys and all that kind of stuff, they process things in smaller segments. So, and then there's this other dynamic of spiritual but not religious. So, and that's the idea. Many have discovered that they can have an encounter with God and they don't need to be sitting in a church to have it. And so you put postmodernism with some of these other movements and that does impact the way in which congregations can relate to those who are not in their congregation and those who are, or seeking some kind of a spiritual and community in which to nurture their spirituality. So would you like to comment how that impacts traditional church models, postmodernism and spiritual, not religious and other movements?

Scott Murphy:

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Yeah, so I, I think the church is in, in some ways a perfect expression of the, of the tension and the sometimes conflict that we are experiencing now between the modern world cultural dynamic and the postmodern world that is emerging. And you know, our listeners can explore that a little bit more, but our current models of how we come together in worship that has been formed over the last 500 years, where modernity has been a part of the way culture in life has been formed. Those models that we have used and have been very successful in the past have not been well-designed or are not, I'm trying to think of the right word, not being formed in ways that will create the space for the postmodern cultures of today. So as you described, some of those behaviors that, and attitudes that post-modern or those from the postmodern traditions have.

Scott Murphy:

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And again, I think it's important for people to understand. It's not to say that that those kinds of perspectives and attitudes are wrong. It's just the way they have encountered the world that's been changing. And, and we know that technology has a huge impact on that and I see that even with my 11 year old grandson and so I get to you know, see that firsthand. But those, that's another reality of what we have to understand that



is happening in our culture today. And we can't just say stop that in it's, it's here, it's with us and it's not going to go away. And many who study these kind of cultural dynamics and trends and have indicated that the postmodern way of encountering the world is going to be with us for possibly the next 500 years as the modern, the maternity world was with us.

Scott Murphy: [00:29:50](#)

And now we're just at the tail end of that and in the transition into another way. So that does create that conflict intention. And I think that part of the challenge is, is that it we're, where we get frustrated at times is that we want people to come to the church. We want people to encounter who we are and to, to come and find joy in the life of the church in the way that we have found joy as we have grown in the church that way. And yet the challenge is in what many of the postmoderns experience is that they aren't free enough to come in and be who they are and bring their, their experiences of life. And because there's always a sense that you have to come and change and be like us. So I, my hope is for congregations is that they will not see this and treat this as competing, but they will continue to be open to say, how do we create that kind of space for others to come in who have different life experiences than us?

Scott Murphy: [00:31:05](#)

And, and how do we allow them to come in with their questions and create that safe space for them to explore their journey with, with God that may be different than the journey where I'm at and from what I've experienced over over my years. But I think the other thing that I would uphold is that we also have to stop seeing this as a, an older generation versus a younger generation. So we, it's the, the baby boomers versus the, the millennials. We, we have to stop looking at it that way because while it's easy to say, yeah, a lot of the millennials have a postmodern perspective of life. The reality is, is that there's, there are baby boomers seniors in and others in some of the other generations sitting in our congregations that have a postmodern perspective. They're just dedicated enough to hang in there with the way things are.

Scott Murphy: [00:32:17](#)

And yet at the same time, if, if, if they're honest, and, and I've had those conversations as I know you have, they struggle because they are there because they value who the church is. But what just traditionally happens doesn't necessarily bring meaning to their lives. And I think the other factor that concerns, so we talk and we read the statistics about the, the spiritual but not religious, the unaffiliated, those who now aren't affiliating or, or claiming any affiliation with the denomination, that number is on the increase. But the other

number that concerns me are the ones that we called the DUNS. They are, they are you and me who have just lost hope and faith in the church that things are going to change that, that say, if this is just gonna be what church is, what happens on Sunday mornings, then it's just not meeting my needs.

Scott Murphy:

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And, and I'm going to find some other way to find that connection and, and live out my discipleship. And they're the ones walking out the church. And so that concerns me because that's a huge loss. So my hope is in the life of the church and our congregations that we are not trying to compete and if there are new expressions that are starting to merge that, that people don't see that as competing or wrong and try to sabotage it, but try to instead say, how do we support that opportunity and for people to experience and encounter God in different ways and acknowledge that it may not be the way that I have journeyed, but that's okay.

Linda Booth:

[00:34:08](#)

Yes. I know you've read this book as well, Scott, and this book has helped me to understand how these radical shifts have occurred all throughout Christianity's life. And it's a book by John Dorhauer and it's called Beyond Resistance. The institutional church meets the postmodern world. And he says that Christians have always experienced these radical shifts over the centuries. And he tries to, in a simplistic way to help describe how those shifts have changed Christianity. And he talks about three different errors. The first is the early Catholic church, which he calls 1.0 and then the church after the Reformation, which is 2.0 and then the church that he thinks and that we've been talking about is emerging now, which he calls 3.0 and he points out that the Reformation church, which is 2.0 a dramatically shifted the culture at that time, but that the Catholic church, the 1.0 church continued on and still exists. And he says that the traditional model churches the 2.0 after the Reformation that they'll continue on to most likely, but that there is something being born in the midst of all of this. And so we're birthing a new way of being the church of being God's people, which he calls 3.0 so do you see indications of a new church or a new way of being a, the church emerging? And if so, what might the future church look like? Especially in the Western culture?

Scott Murphy:

[00:35:58](#)

Yeah, I I actually actually deeply value Dorhauer writing. And I think for me personally, it is one of the best books that so clearly describes the, the cultural transition that the Christian Church and what Community of Christ has been experiencing over the generations. So the people who are listening haven't read John Dorhauer's book. I would just highly encourage that

because again, he does a wonderful job out of his, his tradition and experiences. But yeah. No question. And as you have identified the 1.0 and 2.0 and 3.0 and love how he uses kind of technology terms to describe what's been happening. I do think it's important to understand that that in none of this, should our listeners hear that the two point over what we would call the more traditional church is wrong. Yeah. That's, that's not being said at all. Yeah. Because it has brought meaning for people and there are individuals who will continue to find value in a more standard or form of worship as we have no it and yet at the same time we, we know that others will not. So how do we create that in and what does that begin to look like as new expressions?

Scott Murphy:

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I think that, you know, for me, the, the other challenging factor here is an President Veazey in previous addresses to the church has, has also indicated that there is no clear blueprint on what a 3.0 church looks like. So when we talked about church planting in the past, we all kind of had a blueprint in our mind. What that would look like. But today to talk about planting a new expression of the church, you have to first indicate that it's not to look like what happens on Sunday morning. And so from that, then you begin to ask, so what does it look like? And that becomes part of the discernment journey. So what do I see happening around the church that are expressions of what we would describe as 3.0 church? So I talked about the the hot dog church that happens. I would begin to describe that as pointing towards a 3.0 church, because first of all, it's not happening on Sunday mornings.

Scott Murphy:

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It's now happening on a Wednesday. And the way they come together is, is formed around sharing meals together. Around tables. That's right. And where they are sitting facing each other and not looking at the back of the heads of each other. There, there are fun activities that are also learning activities. It's, it's focused more on relationship building and to see where Christ emerges in the midst of that rather than just focusing on a message about relationships. So I can point to the Capitol congregation in Michigan where that's happening. Here at Stone Church, just across the street from, from the temple where we're at, has this wonderful community dinner going on that not as old was spa is sponsored by community price. But the amazing thing is, is that it has brought participants from other denominations in that they are all working together for the welfare of the unprivileged in those, in poverty in our community around here.

Scott Murphy: [00:40:27](#) And again, what a perfect expression of what I think Zion is about coming together, finding that common purpose and working together for the welfare of human life. But again, it happens around tables sharing together in a meal and the support systems that come and, and engaging in people's lives. Chattanooga, the listeners have heard about Chattanooga for number of years and again, Linda, you have been such a critical part of that in your Apostolic support for that. For me, I continue to point to Chattanooga as a blending of a 2.0 church that maybe is more like a 2.5 or a 2.7 because of what happens on Sunday mornings because it's not just a traditional sitting in pews and that, but all of the other ways they come. But, but something still happens on Sunday mornings. So that falls within that, that kind of 2.0 realm.

Scott Murphy: [00:41:34](#) But there's other iterations, but it's also what happens out in the community.

Linda Booth: [00:41:41](#) All during the week.

Scott Murphy: [00:41:42](#) All during the week. And that's the power. I'm not sure that people fully understand that because the church is going out into other communities and neighborhoods and forming these, these groups and sacred places for people to come together that again don't necessarily look like what happens on Sunday morning, but are, is transformative and powerful in people's lives. And it's such a powerful expression of the church going into the neighborhood in mission.

Linda Booth: [00:42:18](#) And changing the neighborhood.

Scott Murphy: [00:42:19](#) Yes, changing new neighborhood. And that's, and that's why Chattanooga has gotten recognition out of the city for what it's doing. So for me, Chattanooga continues to be a wonderful expression of the blending of both a 2.0 but the, the experimenting in living out of what a 3.0 church model looks like.

Linda Booth: [00:42:41](#) And it also is birthing nurturing and multiplying, which Steve, President Veazey talked about in the Time to Act. And so they're birthing these groups, they're nurturing the groups and then those groups are a multiplying. So the last I heard last week was there were 1700 people participating in Chattanooga ministries, but on Sunday morning there might have only been 300 but 70 I mean they're, but they were at right dorm rooms and they were in a skate parks and all over the place where people meet in close relationships. So it's birthing nurturing and multiplying,

which is an important aspect I think also of these emerging ministries.

Scott Murphy: [00:43:28](#) And again, the attitude of the people who participate on, on Sundays don't see that as competition. No, no. They're supporting those kind of missional initiatives going out.

Linda Booth: [00:43:41](#) And they're not keeping roll on Sunday morning to see who shows up on church because they know if the person's not there, they're most likely doing something in the neighborhood. And so they, they literally have, have people on Sunday morning that would normally be in the pews that they're asking them to go out on street corners and participate in communion services and blessings and prayer. And it's just a constant understanding that what happens on Sunday morning is wonderful, but it's a 24 seven kind of view of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. And I think that's what, that's what the real key is, is that understanding of what it means to be a disciple.

Scott Murphy: [00:44:24](#) Absolutely. And so I think that those begin to be expressions. I use the example of another congregation that I had visited a number of years ago, and I don't know if the congregation is still engaged in that ministry. And if it's not, that's okay. That's not a failure because things just change. But this congregation, actually a few handful of people reached out into the community because the pastor and another had educational backgrounds. They started teaching, parenting skills and working with parents who had, had children taken away and, and again as a means to help bring families back together, they started offering parenting classes as a result of that. They started in inviting individuals in who were seeking for a spiritual home to come. Well, what happened is that this kind of ministry started hold happening on Thursday nights, not on Sunday mornings.

Scott Murphy: [00:45:36](#) When I walked in at, compared to when I had been there five years previous, there were round tables where people were sitting at up on the rostrum was not the, the podium and the chairs were, you know, the speaker and presidens sat. There were sofas and chairs were kids were sitting and hanging out together. And you know, over in the corners where the pastor did a scripture lesson, but it was always, again around a meal coming together. And the previous time when I had been there, there had been 10 people in that congregation. That time when I revisited that congregation in this new form, there were over 45 people that were there. And, and again, I don't know if that congregation is still doing that. And I think what I've learned is that in this changing dynamic of culture that we're in, things will

begin and things will end and you begin to experiment and try something different.

Scott Murphy: [00:46:39](#) But those, those are expressions for me begin to be expressions of, of new opportunities in the life of the church. I think one other that I will share is the emerging opportunities of online communities. Yes, yes. Yeah. So right now, matter of fact, I was just looking at a report that came from one of the Council 12 members who's chairing Robin Linkhart, who's chairing the committee, for on the Council, 12 online ministries. Australia, over in Asia, in, in Europe. You know, multiple Canada, multiple places. There are, we probably have 10 to 12 online communities of people and seekers who are being connected from all around the world formed in community. This is how they come together. And so this is a growing opportunity. Now we, we know that there's a number of congregations that are starting to stream their worship experiences out that people can get online and watch.

Scott Murphy: [00:47:55](#) But this is different. This is people getting on and using the, the software platform Zoom where you can see each other and talk to each other wherever you are in the world. And they are sharing together. I've had the privilege of being one of those that was in a seeker community and had a chance to be with them and, and talk with them and let them ask me questions and what a wonderful experience to be connected with people from just multiple places. But I think again, what I would want listeners to understand is that we have to be careful not to judge and to say, well, that's not really church. We have to be careful not to judge to say those aren't really meaningful relationships because people are finding those relationships. And so the question is, is how do we, how do we create the sacred space for them to come together? What's the technologies? How do we apply budget to help support those kinds of explorations for people to come together where, where they may not have a congregation to attend face to face. This may be the only way people are able to come together in community and be part of the faith community of Community of Christ. And so I celebrate those, those opportunities.

Linda Booth: [00:49:19](#) Absolutely. And it's not just the, they come together once a week or once a month in this community, but they check on each other. If you're using technology each day, they know about each other. I had the opportunity to sit with a group at World Conference who met for the first time, face to face, who had been in these relationships for a year or two. And I was just astounded at the excitement and the joy they had to see each other. But more importantly, I was impressed by the deepness

of their already the relationship they had. It was this as if they're already sister brother already. It just now they were face to face, but they had been soul to soul, heart to heart, using a technology to build these deep and lasting relationships.

Scott Murphy:

[00:50:08](#)

Exactly and I think you know, one other example that I'll, I'll lift up that I think is important and is important for me is that again, we have an increasing number of congregations who are streaming their services out. But that's a one way I encountered up in Toronto at Toronto Center. Wonderful thing of what they're doing, that they are streaming their worship in and educational experiences, but the, the software they're using it allows people to get online. And if you're there in the congregation in Toronto, you see who's joining. And so what it does is it does create this, this bigger connection because when you're in a congregation, this just streaming, you may anticipate there's people online, but you never know who they are. What I loved about Toronto is, is that the people in the, in the congregation there know who's coming online. And so it just expands the community. And so I would, I would hope that we would do further exploration about that because I think if we want to do more than just stream what we're doing in on Sunday mornings, if truly about what we're talking about is creating communities then broadening that awareness and knowing who's a part of the community at, at a given moment, I think is important.

Linda Booth:

[00:51:41](#)

Yes, it is vitally important. Well, we've spent a lot of time talking about the challenges and the opportunity for the church in the future in Western cultures. But I recently returned from traveling with apostle Catherine Mambwe in Zambia and Malawi, Africa. And I recognize there's a lot of challenges in the church in those cultures too, in India, in Honduras, and a variety of places. So in your travels, what are some of the challenges facing congregations and mission centers and how are they addressing a very unique challenges and finding new opportunities to vision the future church where they minister?

Speaker 4:

[00:52:22](#)

Well, I think that what, what I find as an ongoing challenge in, you know, if we had other members of the multi nations council 12 members around the table here and have their input, there's no question as you encountered yourself is that economy is, which has an impact on poverty continues to be a huge factor in that regard. And, and so without the resources it's, it's hard to change that dynamic. And yet at the same time the Council of 12 has been very intentional that as one of our mission initiatives have abolished poverty and suffering to continue to find ways to address poverty in, in many of the places in where

the church is located in, in different nations. I think the, the other factor that we face in the other challenges we face beyond just poverty is that in many of these nations, there is strong, dominant religious conflict that occurs.

Scott Murphy:

[00:53:36](#)

And so not only religious conflict in terms of amongst Christianity, but of other religious traditions. And so when we, when we are in India, even though there's a large population of Christianity in India, it is still primarily a Hindu nation. And so government and the practices there still make it challenging for for our leaders, our members to live being Community of Christ and being part of Christian traditions because of the, the persecution that occurs. So I, I have such deep respect for what, what our members and leaders face in some of these nations with that kind of challenge and rejection and the, the risk and fears that they have because we read in the news and hear the stories of, of death and challenges and conflict that occur in those situations. And yet I continue to be amazed and deeply grateful for the commitment that I see occurring in the midst of these challenges because Community of Christ has a counter cultural message that people believe that need to be heard.

Scott Murphy:

[00:55:10](#)

I remember traveling with Apostle Bunda Chibwe in a nation and I was experiencing and seeing some of the most devastating expressions of poverty, extreme poverty that I had encountered. And, you know, and I said to Bunda, I said, how do you cope with this? How do you be now an African male who lives in the US you experience what you have in the US but come over and have to be in see these, these conditions that people live in. I said, how do you cope with that and deal with that? And Bunda simply said, what continues to give him the hope and to hold on is that is the message that Community of Christ has about salvation and, and again, that that salvation in its multiple dimensions isn't speaking to what happens after death. It's about how are we changing the conditions now? And he says, that's so much different because other traditions, Christian traditions are telling the people this is what God's will is for your life. And so the only thing that they can do is hold on and hope for what comes in the afterlife. And so that, that continues to give me a challenge that we do have a different message, that salvation comes in a different way and it can occur now in the aspect of social justice, in the aspect of economic justice. And you know, the, the worth of individuals as we talk about in our enduring principles. So when I travel in those places and see how joyful people are in Community of Christ, as you have seen, even though they're facing some of the same challenges of postmodernity that's starting to come into their cultures cause we know that the Western world



influences in the non Western world. And so it, they won't avoid it. They're not at the same place that we are in other nations. And yet there is still hope because of the message that Community of Christ has for them and their cultures.

Linda Booth: [00:57:35](#) Yes. And the idea that that they are a part of a partnering with God in salvation in this lifetime and that their lives can make a difference. And, and that worth of where God's calling them is also wonderfully freeing to people who are in bondage of poverty. It gives them a freedom that would not be theirs without that understanding of salvation. Yeah.

Scott Murphy: [00:58:02](#) Yeah, very much.

Linda Booth: [00:58:03](#) Yeah. So you, you've had been talking about missional opportunities and I've also just in this last example I've heard the hope that has risen up in you as you think about the future of the church. So what gives you hope for Community of Christ congregations and mission centers?

Scott Murphy: [00:58:24](#) What gives me the whole the most is the core identity of who we are. Yeah, I know there are people out there who may even be listening that feel frustrated at times and feel like it's not the church that it used to be. And in some ways I would say, yeah, you're right. But in other ways I would say the core identity of who Community of Christ has been from that moment that it was birthed into the imagination of, of Joseph Smith jr and lived on through the multiple generations that bring us to where we are today. That core identity has not changed and has continued to evolve and defined. It's relevant voice and message in the midst of culture as it changes.

Scott Murphy: [00:59:23](#) So that gives me hope. Because it, when I encounter people, as I expressed earlier in the interview of this woman at this retreat who was a nonmember, but she just is amazed at what community of Christ is doing and what we uphold. When I encountered those kinds of experiences coming from the perspectives and experiences of people who aren't, who don't experience all of the dynamics of what it means to be in a, a daily culture, in congregation in all of the challenges that come. But as seeing it from fresh eyes, I say, yeah, this is who we are and we ought to be proud and we need to uphold that. It gives me hope when in, maybe these stories, Jane Jane Gardner, will share at some point in her presiding evangelists role. But I just heard this summer coming out from Jane who had attended the, the international hymn society conference. We have a couple of professors who teach at a theological seminary that is using our hymnal Community of Christ Sings as a text about

hymnody and messages of justice in all of that. How incredible is that? To hear that there are other denominations who, who are wanting to purchase Community of Christ Sings to be able to use in their in their congregations.

Scott Murphy: [01:01:06](#) Those are incredible stories that continue to say something to us that while we may be small, we are not large like other denominations, but our voice can be just as powerful and meaningful and transformative as any other perspective that's out there. And when we are not sharing that and we are not living that and we are not taking that out into the, into the lives of people who are yearning to find what we have. That saddens me. And so I, that's what continues to give me hope. And I am here even in the midst of, of struggles of, of budget and all of that that we have tried to honestly share with, with the church. I know there is so much more that Community of Christ has to do nd for me it's just a privilege to be a part of the church and to, and to be a part of the leadership at this time.

Scott Murphy: [01:02:21](#) In the life of the church, but also to, to be thinking about preparing the way for future leaders and where the church can go. And that's, that's my hope in my role in the presidency and my responsibilities in overseeing the, the mission and operation of the church out into the 50 plus different nations where we're located and working with the Council 12 and our, our field leaders and our mission center officers and all of those individuals doing incredible things out there to join with them and partner with them to help prepare the way for future expressions of what the church is going to be for future generations.

Linda Booth: [01:03:00](#) Thank you. Scott, you have reminded us that Community of Christ's wall small is mighty. That we are being divinely led from its very inception through the generations of people that we have men and women and boys and girls out there who are serving in congregations and mission centers and new missional expressions. And that there is hope for the future. Even as we address the fact that there are radical cultural shifts that are changing the way in which we view and how we as serve as disciples of Jesus Christ. So thank you for those reminders for the hope you share and especially thankful for your leadership, your passion that you have for our mission and your pastoral sense as you lead and help all those different leaders that you shepherd. So thank you very much for that pastor's heart and that missionary spirit that lead you so passionately into the future. So thank you.

Scott Murphy: [01:04:04](#) Thanks.

New Speaker: [01:04:05](#) And thank you listeners. Watch for and listen to the third Coffee Buzz podcast and it will feature a conversation with Community of Christ. President Prophet Steve Veazey.

Outro Music: [01:04:25](#) [inaudible]

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