

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.

Music: [00:00:33](#) [inaudible].

Brittany : [00:00:33](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Project Zion podcast. This is Brittany Mangelson and I will be your host for today's episode. And we are going to be talking with Neil DeAtley who was a tour guide at the Independence Temple recently and now he is living in the DC area and we are going to talk about a little bit about his background with faith and Community of Christ and then what led him to become a tour guide at the Temple and to get his thoughts on the theology, the culture, the meaning everything behind the Temple. So I'm really looking forward to it and I just wanted to thank Neil for coming on today. So thanks Neil.

Neil: [00:01:14](#) Thank you Brittany. It's good to be here with you.

Brittany : [00:01:16](#) So why don't you just give us a really brief introduction of who you are.

Neil: [00:01:21](#) Okay. My name is Neil DeAtley. I'm from West Union, Ohio and I am the invitation minister for the Chesapeake Bay mission center.

Brittany : [00:01:31](#) Awesome. And yeah, we'll talk a little bit about that. It's interesting because as I was thinking of all the topics that we could cover with Neil, there's a lot and we could have him on multiple series and go in a million different directions. So I'm going to try to not go down the Chai Can't Even or the Fair Trade route cause I really want to focus on the Temple. But I think that we will learn a little bit about your background and your ministry in the DC area. So I'm looking forward to it.

Neil: [00:01:56](#) Sure. Yeah.

Brittany : [00:01:59](#) So I guess real quick talk about your conversion into Community of Christ. How long from when the time that you encountered us in college to when you were actually baptized or confirmed? What was that like?

Neil: [00:02:14](#) So my situation is very different as well in many aspects, especially in the case of conversion. I learned about Community

of Christ in 2012 like I said from my history book. And I felt like I was converted in my heart years before I had physical encounters with members of Community of Christ. And a lot of that goes back to my background as a church musician. I was a music teacher for five years and when I was in college I worked for a wide variety of denominations as, as a paid singer in choir as a bass baritone. So because of that, especially after college when I began my teaching career, that's whenever my, my resurgence with the heritage and the story of Community of Christ came was in 2014. So I first learned about the church in 2012 and did a lot of research on it, but I was also a, a junior in college actually.

Neil: [00:03:24](#) So that's whenever I was learning about all of this information when I became a teacher, something, I don't know what it was, but I was working for a Presbyterian church as the handle director serving in music ministry. So I was tied up there on many Sundays for my actual job. However, learning about Community of Christ that first year teaching a school, I had this resurgence, this renewal of wanting to look at the restoration story again, something like I said, I didn't know very much about Community of Christ at that point, besides what I had read on the website, what I read in my American history textbook, what I had seen on the Wikipedia page, YouTube. But like I said, my first year teaching, I had this resurgence, this, this want to to study the movement again, especially Community of Christ. And this was because I was interested in the heritage of the Latter-day Saint movement, but I was drawn to Community of Christ and the fact that it was an inclusive environment.

Neil: [00:04:29](#) So yes, I was interested in the LDS church at this point. I really didn't know much of the differences between Community of Christ and LDS church, still really new, but I wanted to know more. But what really drew me to Community of Christ was national conference 2013 was the fact that this church was attempting to discern what it meant to be an inclusive body. And I really valued that. So I thought, you know, I'm going to give this another try because I love reading about new religions. I did a minor in college of comparative religion, so I decided to revisit the Book of Mormon. And I had a copy of the LDS version that my teacher gave me in 2006 that I called Herald House. And I asked for a revised authorized version of the Book of Mormon because I wanted to know what the differences were.

Neil: [00:05:22](#) I realized that it had some sort of an updated language and lo and behold, they sent me an authorized version and I thought, Oh shoot. So they actually ended up sending me another copy. So then I ended up with both the authorize and the revised and

that's whenever I really dug deeper in a sense I had never done before in my life. I found the John Hamer videos on YouTube and I watched all of them twice. And I said to myself, I'm going to join this church someday. I don't know, because to my knowledge, there were no congregations near near to where I lived. And I don't know when, but I'm going to do it because I had been, and this goes back to earlier in my college career, but I was baptized at the age of two months old. And whenever I was in college, I sang for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in my local college town and very progressive movement.

- Neil: [00:06:21](#) In fact, that had a lot to do with my conversion. Like we could talk for hours about this. There's so much to say, but I learned about believers baptism to them. Now they like our church come from a restoration movement, although they're from the Stone Campbell movement, as you probably know. And they, at this point like Community of Christ except other denominational baptisms. They will even accept infant baptism if one is joining outside of the movement inside of another Christian movement. But that's when I first learned about believers baptism and there was something that spoke to me in college when I was attending that very progressive Christian Church that thought maybe I do want to get immersed someday because I saw how important it was that faith community that led me to the Bible and I wanted to find out more about it. So almost at that time, before I even knew about Community of Christ, this was 2010 I decided I wanted to be immersed, but I didn't know when and as much as I love Disciples of Christ, I still didn't feel like that was going to end up being my spiritual home.
- Neil: [00:07:23](#) Again, put it out of my mind, but then years later in 2014 when I'm revisiting Community of Christ, I thought, well maybe this is the place. Maybe this is what I want to do. And I really do a lot to those John Hamer videos because they're so intensive. They are so thorough and the history and the heritage, I thought, wow, Community of Christ is poised to do a lot of awesome things in the world based off our informed by this rich heritage of God is still speaking of being a people who really take seriously this concept that God is still speaking so much so that they go to write it down and I want it to be a part of that. I'm sorry for being so wordy.
- Brittany : [00:08:10](#) No, it's great. And like I said, I knew that there was a million different sidetracks we'll go down and uh, I appreciate those sidetracks so it's good.

- Neil: [00:08:20](#) Anyway, so that led me to, to the temple basically at the beginning. And then later I was confirmed. I was baptized by John Hamer, April 6th, and that was at the Wellston congregation in Ohio. And John actually came to the Bountiful mission center area in order to do a series of church history. He was doing church history and we were taking a workshop of church history and I decided, because I had put it off, I was loved into the church. I felt like I was a member before I was even officially a member, so I thought, well, I was, I'm not, I don't have any rush to get to become a member at this point because I was, as I began all of this by saying I was serving as a Presbyterian music minister, I was their employee. So even if I wanted to be a part of Community of Christ physically at that time, I wasn't able to, which I did want to be, but I was unable because I worked on Sunday mornings, so I don't know how much longer we want to talk about all of that because there's a whole instance where I was invited to go to the Kirtland temple.
- Neil: [00:09:38](#) That was actually my first physical structure of Community of Christ was not a congregational building. It was the Kirtland temple, and that's really what kickstarted all of this.
- Brittany : [00:09:51](#) No, I, I knew that there was going to be a lot of different ways that we can take this. And uh, I am half tempted to invite you back for our fair trade series where we talk about faith transitions more in depth. Uh, but yeah, I, I actually don't think I realized that you were a tour guide at Kirtland as well.
- Neil: [00:10:14](#) I was at, so my first physical encounter with Community of Christ was a visit to the temple because I'm from Ohio and now granted the temple is at the Lake and I'm from the river. So it is quite a stretch to get to the temple. But then again, it's not as far as where you are from Kirtland. I can get there in a day easily and back home in the same day. So yeah, so that, and then a year later I was guiding and it was so, so my experience at Independence Temple at the center place was really so, so much more deepened because of my experience at Kirtland. And, and I had been a guide at Kirtland the summer before I was at independence. So meeting some of the same people. Again, LDS seminary teachers, you do history trips every summer. I'm getting to reconnect with people who I had met before hearing the similar questions but also in, we can talk about this later, but at the Independence Temple I feel like people are more comfortable to ask these questions because a lot of the questions are reflecting upon them later I found were the same but the atmosphere was so different because many, especially for our visitors who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for them to be able to come to this space

and independence that is solely Community of Christ territory such as the Kirtland temple that is part of that shared history of that.

Neil: [00:11:38](#) The questions were very similar but the atmosphere is 100% different in many cases. I mean obviously you can't generalize everything into one category, but it was, I want to talk to you about that later, about how the questions about the atmosphere that both Temples brought, but they were all rooted in the same burning questions for many of our visitors.

Brittany : [00:12:00](#) That actually is something that I've never thought about. And now I'm fascinated because I think that you, yeah, you're right, because there would be that tension in the Kirtland temple that probably would not exist to the same degree as a.

Neil: [00:12:14](#) Well, people aren't thinking like how did you get this building? Like what do you mean who is this group and who? And like how do, how do you own this building? No one is asking that question now for some people, they're wondering, is this a Latter-day Said church? That I've had many people come, not many, but there were a few, especially people who were not part of any latter day movement at all. Some people came thinking that this was in fact an LDS temple. But those were few. And typically people who knew nothing about Community of Christ. So really the LDS church either besides the fact that it existed.

Brittany : [00:12:53](#) Yeah. Interesting. Okay. I'm really excited now to dive into this. So I am curious and again, I feel silly that I don't think I realized that you were a guide in Kirtland. So maybe if you want to talk about that in general terms as far as your perception of Temple, because having not grown up in a restoration church I'm curious to know what your impressions of the Temple were before becoming a tour guide. So if you want to loop in Kirtland with that or if you just want to put Kirtland aside and only talk about Independence, I'm okay to do whatever you want to do. I'm just interested in your initial impressions of what Temple is.

Neil: [00:13:32](#) Maybe we shouldn't necessarily go down. Well, yeah, like, because my perception of my experiences at the Independence Temple are so intertwined with my knowledge of Kirtland and in fact in my, and the script itself, this is the tour script that I was given and the very first line of it is station one, which is the meditation for chapel. And if you follow this 100% by script, you would say, welcome to the house of the Lord. We hope that you find the Community of Christ temple to be a place of peace, reconciliation of the spirit as the people of the restoration

Community of Christ embraces the vision of Zion. The Temple is at the heart of our identity, our mission, our message, our beliefs as we proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace. So from the beginning of the script, we are connecting this physical structure to our sacred story, to our heritage, to our identity.

Neil: [00:14:34](#) And this idea of being intrinsically in lined with our concept of continuing revelation. That peaceable realm of God is all connected here. And that's the very first thing you say is welcome to the house of the Lord according to the script. Now, that being said there are different options that guides can take. We as guides are to gauge what, who our audience is, what they're looking for, and really meeting the needs of that person. So if we have an architect who has coming from Europe who knows nothing about our little version of Christianity we're not supposed to sit here and proselytize them and say this Joseph Smith in the first division, you know, we don't need to talk about that. We don't necessarily even need to talk about anything dealing with the Christian side of it. Sometimes we will just show the architecture sometimes. we'd lead them straight to the sanctuary so they can photograph the Spire, it really just depends. So as a guide, you have to know who is your community, who is your crowd, who is your audience, and really cater to their needs.

Brittany : [00:15:40](#) That's really interesting and I appreciate that because it kind of caters the experience to the needs of the people which really is a very missional way of looking at the Temple and presenting the Temple. And I think that attitude kind of permeates a lot of what we do in community of Christ as we work with the people in their own context. So it would make sense. So when people come to our sacred space that we would lift up certain elements and aspects that might be of interest to them. So yeah,

Neil: [00:16:12](#) and I also would like to say that, and as you know, this is not coming from a context of Oh, we want to hide what we have under a bushel, so to say. You know, this is because we recognize this as a sacred space. You can see from the, from the way we carry ourselves from the way we interact with people, staff members, and from the design and from the art and everything. We are a Christian faith. However, because we recognize this as a sacred space, as a work of art, as a place of healing, we are not here to make you uncomfortable. So if you want to just look at the architecture, we're happy to do that.

Brittany : [00:16:56](#) Yeah. Aww, I love that. Love that. That's a very, like I said, very Community of Christ. Way to present ourselves and I appreciate

it. So Neil, I'm curious, cause you said that your time in Kirtland really impacted how you saw the Temple in Independence. So tell us a little bit about that. How did your experience in Kirtland and being a tour guide in Kirtland help you or prepare you for what you experienced in Independence?

Neil:

[00:17:27](#)

So my time in Kirtland, I am, I love church history. I love church heritage. I love the sacred story. I love what it, I love what it has done and continues to do for theology and Community of Christ and how the heritage doesn't dictate our theology, but it certainly informs who we are as a people discerning God's will today and learning the heritage of the temple by visiting it. I didn't just have to necessarily only read about it in a book. Being able to physically visit it and hear the interpretation of the guides and just to be in that sacred space. It was a wonderful experience because being a guide, I had the key to the Temple. I could go in after work was over and practice piano and I thought, wow, like what an interesting, you know, there are millions of people around the world who revere the sacred space.

Neil:

[00:18:22](#)

And I just felt very fortunate and humbled to be able to be there day in and day out. And obviously like the Independence Temple, there was a wide variety of interpretations of what it is, what it can be, but especially connecting it back to Independence, the concept of house of worship, house of learning, house of order, and understanding the purposes of the Kirtland Temple as a place of worship, a place of service to commune with God in community, a place of learning like the second floor of the temple, which was the house of mine, apostles. And that was an extension of the School of the Prophets from the Newel K Whitney store, this understanding of education of priesthood. And I think of Community of Christ current theology and our emphasis on education of using the best books of trying to be as academically honest as possible and searching the sources.

Neil:

[00:19:19](#)

I mean, this is nothing new. Joseph Smith and his associates were in the, in Kirtland temple studying Hebrew. They were trying to be as educated as possible when it came to many things. So connecting. So to be able to see the church, the church's theology today, that I love, I joined because of Community of Christ message. This idea of peace and hope and love and joy and seeing how interconnected it is to our heritage. It's not apart from that, but it's in, and it's not dictated by every single thing that it's from our past. But this heritage and being in Kirtland temple really solidified that concept for me.

- Brittany : [00:20:02](#) I think that that is such a unique journey. I mean, coming into Community of Christ, not being part of the restoration movement through Joseph Smith and then becoming a guide in Kirtland and then becoming a guide in independence and being able to kind of see that natural progression of, you know, we talk about the journey of the people, but in a lot of ways your own journey kind of followed that same pattern and outline and
- Neil: [00:20:29](#) Right. Especially the fact that this journey was initiated when I was six years old with an introduction to the LDS church, I thought for very long time I thought had absolutely no break offs. When I thought of the Book of Mormon, I thought of distinct LDS theology such as celestial marriage or temple practices. Looking back on it, although when I was investigating the LDS faith, that's such a young age, I knew what the Book of Mormon was and we did read from it from verses, but I really didn't know. I didn't, I didn't know the differences and I don't know exactly how much we really even want to go into that, but I didn't know how the book of woman differed from even current LDS theology. So to me that's what it was for me was just this sense of this book. I don't know much about it, but it's belongs specifically to this faith. And then to find out that it's actually greater than that, that it is it is a book of scripture for many different different sects and movements in denominations. It was just really interesting for me to see the Kirtland temple to seek Community of Christ and this inclusive message, but also embodying an interpretation of what I learned and thought it was solely belonging to the LDS church.
- Brittany : [00:21:54](#) Yeah. What a story. I love it. So I guess, Oh, I'm, I'm really trying to stop myself from going down a bunch of other different rabbit holes, but.
- Neil: [00:22:08](#) Every time I finish talking I think I'm sorry we've got to talk about the Temple
- Brittany : [00:22:13](#) No, you're, you're totally fine. This is great. So let's, let's talk about the Temple and Independence and I'm curious to know kind of just cause I, you know, I don't, I don't think that a lot of our listeners have maybe been tour guides. I certainly have not. Maybe some have, but I'm wondering just what is a typical day like what kind of visitors do you have? What is your routine? What kind of thing are you talking about? Just kind of a typical day in the life of a tour guide at the Independence T,emple.
- Neil: [00:22:46](#) Okay. So it really depends on the day. Depends on the week. It depends on the month. If it is the highest season of pilgrimage for many of our visitors, then you could have many hundreds



and hundreds of people in the temple in a day. Now we have, unlike Kirtland Independence, temple only has two and terms in the summer. So I was an intern also with with Nick Healer. He is a recent alum from Graceland university. In fact, he is in Spain right now teaching English as a second language. He'll be there for quite some time. So if you can hear this, Nick, hello! Hope he's enjoying your time in Spain. So we also had a variety of, of staff and volunteers. So a lot of the, a lot of the volunteers at the Temple will give tours and that, and the volunteers changed from day to day. So the first things, first we have to prioritize and you come in and you start your coffee, (laughter) you start the coffee and then you turn on the lights.

Neil: [00:23:58](#) And so that was, that was my job. Now I also did this with my boss. He's a seventy in the church Rob Borkowski as well as the Temple security guy, John Ballard. So the security guard, he was our security guard, not our security guide. John. And some days he would do this. But for most typically I would come in, start the coffee, turn on the lights, go up the worshippers path and make sure that the little signs are turned on because they light up. So you can read the scriptural reference and all of the stations of the worshippers path for people who are maybe doing a self guided tour are listed there so they can read it and understand and interpret the visuals that they see as they progress through that path. Then we would turn on the lights and the heritage museum and the temple museum. We would make sure that the theater is up and running. And then just day to day activities, make sure that the desk is ready to receive guests, that the, that the computer is working. The guest book, all of the different things, the day to day activities, but most importantly turn on the coffee because literally some of our receptionist will not be happy if they come in and the, and those no Temple tour coffee going on.

Brittany : [00:25:18](#) I just have a very large grin on my face and I'm giggling to myself because I love that that's the number one priority for Community of Christ's Temple is make sure there's coffee going

Neil: [00:25:28](#) and you cannot go into a different office or wing of the Temple where there with that specific department doesn't have their own coffeemaker running.

Brittany : [00:25:39](#) I love it. I love it. So Neil you were talking about kind of the differences in atmosphere and attitude between the people that come to Kirtland and that they, when they come to Community Christ Temple in Independence and not that the people necessarily have a different attitude, but it's just the

atmosphere is different. So talk a little bit more about that because I'm really interested in, in dissecting that.

Neil: [00:26:05](#) I think first and foremost the fact that we are in a modern building that looks nothing like Kirtland Temple. So being surrounded by this heritage in Kirtland, and I'm looking at a picture of both the Temples here. You know, being in that space to me was very similar because I recognize how the heritage of Kirtland informs the theology of the independence temple. Although the Independence Temple looks nothing like it's Kirtland forebear it to is a house of worship, a house of learning, house of order. And it is informed by that sacred story. The things that are going on in the theology behind the Independence Temple, although it is for today because we are living in today is, is so intertwined with this concept that was so important to our forebears of the early church and how it's just interesting how they're so intertwined, but yet different because you're in a modern building, you're in a building that's shaped like a Nautilus shell and it's huge. So many people who came to the Temple and who came to the temple throughout the summer would comment on the, on how complex this, this international headquarters is, how giant everything is, the Temple, the Auditorium, all of the space that the church owns, they're on the greater temple law is very overwhelming because it is so beautiful and massive. Many people commented on that.

Brittany : [00:27:46](#) Yeah, that doesn't surprise me. And I know that when I, I saw Community Christ temple when I was a teenager, but then I went back again as an adult. Oh, I've been back several times now. But the first time I went back as an adult and as a member of Community of Christ, it was a lot bigger than I remembered it being. Uh, just the, the height of the spiral. And I mean, you know, I live a stone's throw away from the Salt Lake temple, Mormon temple and Utah. And so I'm used to big churchy buildings, but there's something about Community of Christ temple where it's just the single spiral just going straight up. That's just majestic.

Neil: [00:28:26](#) And you can see it from such, from so far away,

Brittany : [00:28:29](#) Yeah, you can see it from several points in the city. I know that when my family's driven around in Independence, you know, we'll go over a hill or something and all of a sudden I'm like, "Kids look! It's the Temple!" Cause it'll just pop up through the trees. And I mean,

Neil: [00:28:41](#) it's such an amazing experience. This is something I found to be very interesting. It's a little sidetrack, but it has to do with the

Temple. There was a group of people, a small group who came in off of the street who had no idea that this was a Community of Christ Temple, did not know anything about Community of Christ. And they thought that this was a Temple for an Eastern faith. They were shocked when they found out this was actually a building an edifice for the Christian faith.

Brittany : [00:29:10](#) Yeah. And I know that Wallace B Smith has talked about that a little bit of how the, the shape and the design in and of itself was, is a kind of ecumenical, interfaith. You know, it branches beyond just your typical Christian imagery that it really connects to Eastern, Eastern images of God.

Neil: [00:29:37](#) I would even incorporate that into my temple script to say, because people wanted to say, why the Nautilus shell? Why this design? Is there something in the Bible that we're missing about a sea shell? You know, we would have many different questions and I would always say, well, and this is partially from the Temple video from our new video, but whenever the prophetic inspiration for the design and the building of the temple came up out, Wallace B Smith and his associates wanted to have a structure that could be recognized by people of all parts of the world as sacred space. I would often say because many we had members and visitors from all over the world, people from Europe, people from Asia, South and Latin America all over the place. But obviously a lot of our visitors were also American citizens. And I would say coming from an American or even a greater Western context, we can all look at a building like Kirtland and say, Oh, that's probably a church. It's white, it's on a box. It's got beautiful windows, a steeple, a Belfry. But yet if you are coming from a context that is not from the Western world, that symbol may mean nothing to you. But yet this symbol of the Fibonacci sequence, the Spire, everything is embodying sacred space for people from a Western context, but also from an Eastern context, from any part of the world. All people can recognize the sacredness of the space.

Brittany : [00:31:10](#) Exactly. Yeah. So Neil as far as the types of questions that you got from the visitors, can you kind of compare and contrast that to the Kirtland Temple? What were, what were some of the questions that were unique or how was the vibe different?

Neil: [00:31:32](#) It was interesting because it was both were very positive experiences. And one thing I noticed though, in the Kirtland temple, the burning question for me from many people for me was to know about how Community of Christ, how the our LDS church obtained the Kirtland Temple. When did it switch over? Was that a direct switch? How many years in between Joseph

Smith junior staff did Community of Christ obtained the temple were animals held in the Temple? Many different things. Does your church use this as a sacred space or is this just a place for you all to give tours? What is the point of this Temple? Do you do baptisms here? Are there, are there marriages that happen here? When did the church stop doing secret and sacred ordinances? You know, many misconceptions that just didn't make their way to Independence because people knew.

Neil:

[00:32:34](#)

Many of our visitors knew and I will say I befriended President Canon and Sister Canon. They are the historic site directors or some of the historic sites owned by the LDS church and the independence area. And they are wonderful people. Well, I would have dinner at their home and I loved going over to their visitors center and taking tours from them, but they were very good to send a lot of their visitors to our temple. So many people would go to the LDS visitors center with see all that it has to see. And for people who are in Independence, I encouraged them to go, is very history oriented. There's a section on the book of Mormon sectional and families. They've put a lot of intentional thought on how they present it. But they were very generous and they would send a lot of those visitors to us.

Neil:

[00:33:24](#)

So many of our visitors were from the LDS faith and they would want to know a lot of questions about Community of Christ theology, a lot of questions about women in the priesthood, our view of scripture, our view of the Book of Mormon, of the book of Doctrine and Covenants, our book of prophetic leaders, our view of prophetic leadership. There were so many questions and I felt that they could be asked in maybe more of a freeing environment because we weren't standing in the midst of a building that has shared space. We were standing in a building that was built in 1994 that is uniquely Community of Christ. Although there were many questions going back to the sacred story, wondering art, its significance from the temple law and in the greater temple lot and our view of temple lot and our, you have temples and there's so much to say.

Brittany :

[00:34:22](#)

Yeah, I think that, like you said, having it be a uniquely Community of Christ building knowing how I was as a bright young skipper, Mormon youth, I know that when I went to Kirtland there definitely was, I don't know a sense of animosity, a sense of just kinda like, how did you get this building like you said. And, and I actually never toured the Community of Christ Temple in Independence as a Mormon youth. But I can see how being kind of on their turf, again, I'm putting my Mormon hat on would make it easier to freely ask those questions that may be

in Kirtland because there's that slight tension. You might not be able, you might not feel as free to ask. But yeah, I do remember going to Kirtland and feeling kind of this, this tension. And I actually am pretty sure that Lach Mackay was my tour guide when I went to Kirtland as a Mormon teen.

Brittany : [00:35:30](#) We kind of have trailed back the timeline of when I was there and he knows my uncle and I had this when I first met him, had this kind of like I recognize you cause he has kind of a unique voice. And it was, yeah, one of those moments where I'm like, I'm pretty sure that we met when I was on a church history tour as a, as a Mormon youth. But, but anyways, I know, the stars were all aligned. I just needed to just be able to see it. But yeah, I can see why going into that space would be, your guard would be down a little bit because it's, there's not that shared history in that, in that space.

Neil: [00:36:11](#) I think so. Yeah. And it was also a place of different, but yet similar. For example, the Sacred Grove was a point of interest for many of our visitors to go into the meditation chapel and to see the sacraments or the ordinances of the church to see the, to hear the names of those sacraments or ordinances. And also to see the, because the paintings, I'm speaking of, the paintings inside the meditation chapel to see them depicted with women performing these rights from any people brought questions of a wide variety of categories. Some people were in awe and they were all struck by seeing women of different nationalities and ethnicities and men and all people performing these sacraments, the sacramental rights because there were so many wonderful, wonderful, meaningful experiences. The temple is Zion. There were, I mean, I felt that this summer like Kirtland to be in the building is only as sacred as the people who inhabit it, who go there and to have these meaningful discussions, to talk scripture, to talk heritage, to talk vibrant future with those people on a day to day basis. I was so humbled by that experience, so I really wanted to accentuate that.

Brittany : [00:37:38](#) Yeah. So I have a, a random question for you. And so when I am talking with people about the Temple in Independence, I like to kind of ride on Wallace B Smith credibility in that he is the great grandson of Joseph Smith. So I'm wondering if that ever came up in your conversations that it was actually a direct descendant, a recent direct descendant of Joseph Smith that presented this a revelation to the church. I mean, did that, did that ever come up at all in your conversations?

Neil: [00:38:10](#) It came up because I incorporated that into my into my tour script. So many people commented throughout the summer.

Thank you for, for really clarifying these questions. There were people who had been to the temple before who left unsure of how this building fit into our identity as a people within the Latter-day Saint movement as a people, as a prophetic people. So I really, and plus I have the advantage of having this Kirtland heritage is currently to experience being able to explain the building in which we are standing right now here in Independence Missouri is connected intrinsically to the ministries of Kirtland temple. It may look nothing like it's Kirtland forebear, but the ministries that are embodied here are very similar. And this idea that this building came through prophetic inspiration through Joseph Smith's great grandson. And how it also, and ties in the, I don't know if I would want to use the word mandate, but this inspiration from the divine, from God that women are to be recognized as equal with, with all people, with, with men and priesthood leadership and authority and church leadership. This isn't something like you said, that we decided to do on a whim, but this is something that we as a prophetic people through the leadership of our prophet discerned that this is where God is leading us today.

- Brittany : [00:39:40](#) Yeah, I'm glad to hear you say that because I, I feel like when I am talking with faithful LDS people and there is that tension there, when I tie it back to all Smith and say that, you know, Community Christ, we see this as a point of restoration. We see this as a point of reconciliation in something that has maybe gone awry in Christian history. And you know, we, the temple has always been really meaningful in our movement and this is our interpretation of, of that. And so usually when I tie it back to Wallace B Smith and reiterate that this is a great grandson of Joseph Smith jr there's kind of a I dunno even a sense of reverence that our LDS friends and family even have for a Wallace just because of who he is. And I mean we can argue whether that's a good thing or a bad thing or whatever, but it's, it just that that family lineage and that line just kind of garnered some respect. And so, uh, yeah, I'm
- Neil: [00:40:40](#) Yeah, oh, I'm sorry.
- Brittany : [00:40:42](#) Oh no, I was just going to say I'm glad to hear that. Yeah, you've tied that into,
- Neil: [00:40:48](#) I just think it ties back in and it reiterated our shared heritage, Joseph Smith and his family being so influential in all movements of the latter day Saint faiths and the latter day Saint denominations and sect. It really ties us back to our cousins, to our siblings to show that yes, we are different movements, we are different fads. We have different theology, different

interpretation of the story. But we are intrinsically connected. I mean we're standing in a temple in Jackson County and Independence, Missouri, like we, Oh, it's because of Joseph Smith that we are here. And to make that connection and to see that Community of Christ current theology is in harmony with the vision of our spiritual forebears because God still has more light and truth and that the temple is intrinsically bound to that theology is an amazing experience. It was humbling for me and it was very interesting to, to share that with people of many faiths, but especially to our LDS siblings and cousins.

Brittany :

[00:41:59](#)

Hmm. Thank you. That's, yeah, that's really, really beautiful. So I guess speaking of Wallace B Smith, and you kind of mentioned the new temple video a little bit, I'm curious to know because this new temple video that we, uh, we recently featured it on Project Zion that Bryce Veazey did. And this is a new film that launched at world conference. And then this summer I hear that it has been played as the little intro video to the Temple. So I'm wondering how that has been received by people because it's a pretty diverse video. It, it focuses on history and then it focuses on the modern implications of temple in a wide variety of places in the world. So I'm just, I'm curious to know what the general reaction to that video has been.

Neil:

[00:42:48](#)

For the most part, it was overwhelmingly received with praise, especially from our LDS visitors. Many people left saying, wow, what a timely update. What an what an informative update. I now understand how this building, what the purpose of this building is and the terms of its architecture and the terms of its heritage. One of the very first things we see is Doctrine and Covenants. 157, I believe is Joseph Smith saying this is the place that the place where the temple is in independence and it's the center place. And then it goes to the different prophetic, the different councils given through the doctrine and covenants by the different prophets about what a temple is. So it talks, it features Wallace Smith and his 1968 revelation that prepare yourselves a temple is coming and then it references section one 56. The idea that the temple will be built in the pursuit of peace.

Neil:

[00:43:51](#)

And then also it goes on to president grant McMurray and president Veazey leading us into a temple, uh, people of the temple today. And also reminding us that as members and friends of Community of Christ, we are called to be a prophetic people. And I love that President Veazey emphasizes the passage of scripture from the book of Ephesians saying that we are called to be the living sanctuaries. And that video really inspire me and my presentation of the temple, I feel like it was

deeper prophetic council of what this building is. We are people who have inherited this, this beautiful structure or what does it mean? And oftentimes we have our own concepts, our own personal interpretations of what that means for us. But to have to turn that, to turn around and share that with people from a wide variety of faith or no faith at all depending on the individual or the group was an interesting process. And it really made me contemplate on my own personal theology of the purpose of a temple and what that means today for me and for, for my faith movement that I represent and for our church, for community of friends.

- Brittany : [00:45:09](#) Yeah. I know that when I first saw the temple video I was, I was in a meeting so I got kind of a little sneak peek of it and yes, my family's featured, uh, which by the way, my daughter, every once in a while when I remind her that that videos shown to hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, she gets a little bit, well, she gets super shy about it. It's really sweet and it's kind of a, one of those full circle moments for me as a parent. But
- Neil: [00:45:37](#) funny thing is about your daughter is that is the very end. So they modified this video. It's a long video, but they modified it to be eight and a half to nine minutes. The very last thing that I knew and I heard, Oh, I have to go in and start it was to follow your voice through your grace, we see a brighter future through your guidance. We find meetings. So it's funny, like these little things that you memorize. I heard that on a daily basis that we listened to right before we would go in and start the tour. So,
- Brittany : [00:46:06](#) Oh, that makes me happy. She was so nervous to film that. And it was funny because we, Bryce asked us to send an audio of her saying those words. Yeah,
- Neil: [00:46:15](#) because it was you.
- Brittany : [00:46:17](#) Yeah, yeah. In the video. And then he wanted her voice to say it. So we did, you know, just with our podcasting equipment and she thought she was so cool because she sees me doing podcasts all the time and I had to remind her, well, this is going to the Temple video that you were in. And then she got all nervous about it again. But it was, it was pretty sweet.
- Neil: [00:46:38](#) So for like the first three weeks of the video being plagued, it was your voice. And then we decided we had this child being featured and this grown adult voice, it needs to be modified yet again. So finally it was, it's, it's received all of its cuts. Yeah. Wonderful.



Brittany : [00:46:57](#) I need to get there and watch the modified version and with my kids in it. I think that's, that's really great.

Neil: [00:47:07](#) It's a wonderful,

Brittany : [00:47:08](#) But that temple, I mean I felt, I felt like I had known a lot about the Temple., but to see it, to see the temple through the eyes of a President Smith and President Veazey and then the different stories that Bryce shares from an international perspective, being able to see the temple and its meanings through that perspective, through those perspectives was really helpful for me. And of course I live with my kid and hear her talk about her interpretation of the Temple. But to be able to share what the temple means from a child's perspective, who lives, you know, a two days drive away was really special for us. And I hope that other people got out of it what we intended. And I'm sure that people got out of it what everyone else who was involved with the video intended. So I, I learned a ton about the Temple through that video. Whereas I, I kinda thought I had the temple figured out, which seems so silly because I don't think you can have the temple figured out.

Neil: [00:48:12](#) It's like Jesus just when we think we have it down the, the table turns. And that's funny whenever you were saying that and maybe then come my own personal theology and being a student of a Presbyterian seminary that has over 25 denominations represented, oftentimes when we will bring up a theological topics or discussions over justice or, or dogma or heritage or anything going along the lines of faith, I will hear such a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints. And this summer really prompted me to think about my own personal theology of temple and what that means to be a part of a Christian group, a denomination that builds temples, that sees them as places of sacred space that some of our other siblings in the Christian faith may not embody that into their tradition. So this video really prompted me to consider the concept of the temple as a center place of, of renewal.

Neil: [00:49:25](#) And a center place of continuing inspiration in revelation and like you said, to see this video that is highlighting the prophetic inspiration of President Veazey but also president grant McMurry and our current president Steven Veazey, to hear their perspectives and to hear how they're all rooted in that same eternal source about how the temple is continually calling us to be a prophetic people. It makes me wonder what is in store for the next hundreds of generations. Like what will this, yes, it has such a marvelous heritage and story, but of what it yet might become and how we are members on that chart. It's

just, it really ties it all back to this concept of Zion, this peaceable realm of God, of building relationships. Fascinating. And I really appreciate that video for helping me to go further with my concept of my own personal theology and what the temple means to the church today and to me

Brittany :

[00:50:27](#)

Exactly. That's, that's exactly how I felt about it. And I just deeply appreciate that it's been shared by so many people, shared to so many people because I think that it kind of, it speaks for itself and it speaks for the diversity in our movement and it speaks to the direction that we're going and that it has, the temple has real life implications, whether that's you know, in the Plains of Africa, whether that's in the suburbs of Salt Lake City or you know, in, in central South America or whether that's an independence wherever it may be. I think that it's really, really important to get that global perspective of what the temple can mean to us today. So I appreciate it. So, Neil, I'm wondering if there were any other special projects or displays or anything worth noting that were particular to this past summer? Cause I know that there is a museum and I know that there's a display case in the foyer. So I'm just wondering if there were any other things besides for the new temple video that happened this summer at the temple?

Neil:

[00:51:40](#)

Yes. One of our projects this summer, a big part of the temple itself and the temple complex is the church there to museum and it houses so many precious artifacts of the Latter-day Saint movement. We have copies of the manuscripts of the inspired version of the Bible. We have a Whitmer trunk that, how is some of the original pages of the Book of Mormon. We have the door to the Liberty jail, Joseph Smith's Nauvoo militia suit and his sword. We have a hunk of the original Kirtland Temple. So the, a big part of the Temple complex is, is having a place to honor our past and our sacred story. And as you said, that museum houses a Temple of museum display window. And for the 25 anniversary, the 25th anniversary of the Temple, it had been dedicated to the building of the structure itself and what it was like in 1994, the dedication and what led to the building of the temple.

Neil:

[00:52:48](#)

So honestly, to go back to this video, whenever we were just talking about whenever we were coming forward with the concept of the, of the design and the construction of the museum window, I thought wouldn't it be great if we could accentuate the message of the video and to the display? And that's exactly what we did. So as we were talking in the video, that is the new temple video that you see when you come to take a tour. We basically modified that and put it into a

museum display. It is dedicated to the temple lot. It is dedicated to the early Latter-day Saint movement and our continuing story as a journey of a prophetic people. It is dedicated to the ever fluid concept of the early church of temple. Lot of what a purpose of a temple is. So thank you John Hamer for providing us with maps and with diagrams and the museum window, we added the first and the second plot for the city of Zion, which comes, John Hamer has digitized to them in artwork that they're beautiful in.

Neil: [00:53:52](#) These are drawings that came from the prophet Joseph Smith jr and his associates for what the Sinterklaas complex would be like. And if you look at it over the 63 acre plot of land, which is known as the greater Temple Lot today, just today owned and operated by three separate latter day Saint churches, it shows that there are 24 temples on that complex. Some people come in with an idea that, Oh, this Temple's in the wrong spot. Or this, this temple is, you know, like this isn't a temple or, you know, some people would have back in that concept because it's not across the street where our other cousins, the Church of Christ have their meeting house. So we wanted to accentuate that, the idea of Temples, that the idea of temple Y since the inception of the thought and the inspiration of the early church has been fluid.

Neil: [00:54:44](#) So we wanted to really accentuate that. So for that reason on the back, we have a picture of the Temple Lot from 1890, I believe it's 1898. It's a beautiful picture. We had it blown up. We've got it from the Temple archives and it's this giant image of the par, a portions of the greater temple lot from standing from where the auditorium would be today facing Stone Church. And it highlights the portion of the temple lot that is owned and operated by Church of Christ today. It's really interesting to see that image because there are trees on the temporal art and also there is a fence surrounding it and a cow in the bottom left hand corner. So we wanted to accentuate that this concept of temple, this concept of the center place has been fluid from the beginning and continues to be. It's ever expanding.

Neil: [00:55:39](#) And that is part of archeology. So we wanted to incorporate our past and our present. So we also had maps that highlighted the Exodus of the saints throughout the Midwest leading ultimately to Nauvoo. But then also we wanted to talk about what the temple means for us. So we, so we start with our heritage and like the video, we used the same quotes that the video used. So we start with section 57 of the doctrine and covenants with Joseph Smith jr talking about the center place. Then we go to

Joseph Smith, the third and we use general conference minutes and he is in the stone church when he says this, and I'm paraphrasing him, but he says the ground where we are is sacred and it should be seen that way by us. And then we go on, we skip a couple of presidents because not all of the presidents spoke extensively about prophets.

Neil:

[00:56:37](#)

So we go to w Wallace Smith from his 1968 prophetic council saying, prepare yourself the time is coming. Then we go to section 156 then we go to president. Easy. We're talking about how the temple has been seen, how the temple law has been seen in this ever evolving field that continues to be the church. And we also wanted to continue to highlight the video. So we quote Ephesians saying the verse talking about how we are the sanctuary as we are the living temples of God. And also whenever we were coming forth with the conception in the, in the design, you were asked to put the heritage hand in hand with the, with the present and the future. So we decided to use a section of the Doctrine and Covenants and it's section 102 that is saying Sue for Peace. Lift up to an ensign of peace.

Neil:

[00:57:34](#)

And we found in the Temple art storage room, this beautiful depiction of the temple that came from the early days of the building that says the temple and ensign of peace. So we decided to nounce that scriptural verse from the Doctrine and Covenants that comes from prophetic inspiration of Joseph Smith jr to show that we have constantly been discerning what does it mean to be peaceful, what does peace mean to us and our desire, our imaginative desire to lift up and ensign of peace. And as members of Community of Christ today, how we see that Temple as being the ensign of peace calling us forward. So it's not that this building is apart from its sacred story. It's not that it's dictated by its sacred story, but it is deeply informed by the inspiration of our forebears. And we are constantly seeking what does that mean for us today and for our future. It's very fascinating for many of our members to connect and from any of the seekers and the guests and the visitors to see how different the interpretations can be of what Temple means. And also that it's concept of what is a house of order. What is a house of learning? What does a house of worship.

Brittany :

[00:58:54](#)

I deeply appreciate the intentionality of tracing that back and tying it to our foundation. And I think that it matters because there, there might be a perception that we don't know why we have a temple. We don't, especially when we were building it, I know that there was a lot of talk about what was the purpose of the temple. What were we going to do in the temple? And the is, is that we had the answers the whole time. And the identity

that we carried from our founding, the foundation of our movement has been carried into the present day through the temple. And we being a prophetic people and like you said, we believe that we are people of the temple. We are the sanctuaries going out into the world. And that is depicted very literally in the temple. But I think that at all it matters because that's the Christian message in action is what I'm getting at.

Brittany :

[00:59:53](#)

And I really appreciate that. It's not just, we're not just some quirky little group that made this all up and that we have missed the point so to speak with temple that what we, what we have and the message that we carry in and out of the temple is part of our DNA. And I think that that's really important for us to remember because I think that sometimes Community for Christ folks, we don't give ourselves the credit that we deserve as a denomination. And when I think about the temple and when I think about all the other interpretations of temple and Zion and building the kingdom and going out into the world and proclaiming the good news, I just really resonate with how Community of Christ has interpreted that. And it's all lived out very, very well in the Temple. And so that reminder for me is really transformative. And, uh, at my best, I guess it helps me transform my life and how I interact with the world in a way that other interpretations were never able to do. And uh, yeah, I just really appreciate it. So being able to tie that back to our founding movement, I think is really, really important. So,

Neil:

[01:01:05](#)

so the way that I liked to start basically start at the beginning of my interpretation of the building and that's what I like to call it. I like to call it an interpretation of the building is this Temple is our church's sacred story and our heritage and our beliefs and our theology and our vibrant and future set in stone. This is something greater than us. And this is something that continues, even the architecture itself is pulling us into this movement, this going forward, in motion, in service to the world. This is archaeology, such a stone. So when I would show people that simple, I like to call it an interpretation because that's what, that's what it is. Everything is so significant to our sacred story. The worshipers path alone is like a sermon series. It really is because I mean every single thing is so intentional and that's what I love about the Temple and the art and everything that goes behind it is so intentional to our movement, into the Christian story and to the future.

Neil:

[01:02:11](#)

It's beautiful. And it really, I think we forget how many people this inspires. We can easily take it for granted and I pray that we will never do that. I pray that I will never do that because we have this source of continuing revelation here that has been

given to us for a reason. And I love the fact that we haven't said, Oh, this is exactly what the Temple is because it's fluid. The day that we have it all figured out is the day that God is no longer revealing and the Temple reminds us that. So

Brittany : [01:02:40](#) Yeah. Whew. Yeah. I just, I just think that knowing that we are a true reflection of, uh, of what happened in Kirtland and not everything, but that we are a true reflection of where God's showed up in Kirtland and where God showed up in the foundation of our movement and that this is, this is our, like you said, interpretation. I dunno, I'm obviously just feeling feelings about it.

Neil: [01:03:16](#) No. And I'm there with you like, and I'm having these, these, the, I really miss Independence. There is a sacred aura about that place because, because we as a, people have made it that way. Like we see it like there's, I mean there's good times, there's bad times. It's the best of times. It's the worst of times. Like when is that? Never, when does that not the case in any part of history, but to be there. I was so humbled and to think back on my time as a current lens. I just think, wow, like so many millions of people around the world revere the sacred space and to be able to, cause I, when I was in independence, I lived in the home of Dr. Joseph Luff, which is basically on the Temple lot itself. I basically got to live on the temple block from my front porch right across the street from my front porch this summer was the Church of Christ temple lie.

Neil: [01:04:09](#) And then I could see from my living room window the beautiful Independence Temple in the Auditorium. And it's just such a humbling experience to be in such a sacred, a sacred space. And to know that this is not the only sacred space in the world. That wherever God's people are located, wherever God is continuing lead, bringing together people to praise God, to worship God, to bring us into this mindset of love, joy, hope and peace that that is also sacred, but specifically for this movement to get to see that. And Brittany, let me just say, I saw some very interesting and colorful things. For example, at midnight on Saturday night groups would come together on the temple, on the Church of Christ temple lot. And when I refer to the temple lot, I meaning that one specific one and a half acres where the Church of Christ maintained their meeting house in their headquarters.

Neil: [01:05:02](#) But people, one time I came home, Dr. Richard Troeh and his family and I decided to go some cats at the Starlight theater and it was a Saturday night and we came home very late and I looked out my front door and I saw a group of people seated in a, with it waving a giant white flag back and forth on the Temple

Lot to see people from fundamental breakoffs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Prairie dress. And to see them kneeling on the Temple Lot during the day, to see people coming in and singing hymns, praying, taking photos, having picnics with their family. I just thought, wow, like we are in such an important place in American history and in world history. Wonderful.

- Brittany : [01:05:53](#) Yeah. And it's all right there. And there's so many denominations that are represented in just that tiny, tiny little corner of the world
- Neil: [01:06:02](#) All because of this quirky little movement that has so much time like that. It's amazing.
- Brittany : [01:06:08](#) Yeah. Oh, I agree. It's humbling. It is. It really is. And it's exciting and it's overwhelming, but in a good way.
- Neil: [01:06:18](#) Hmm. I agree
- Brittany : [01:06:20](#) Now that I've stopped crying. We can
- Neil: [01:06:24](#) I'm loving this. Brittany, this is wonderful. I love talking this with you.
- Brittany : [01:06:26](#) I know this is so great. Yeah, I really just think your perspective is so unique like I keep saying and so I really, really appreciate it. I guess you know, moving on and kind of wrapping up, I'm wondering if you have any final thoughts about the temple that you want to leave us with?
- Neil: [01:06:48](#) Sure. I guess my, for myself, that Temple has left an impression upon me and upon my spirit to contemplate and to meditate upon the concept of being rooted and such a rich and imaginative movement. What is next? What can we learn from our, from our heritage, from our story, not only from the Latter-day Saint movement, but from Christendom, from greater, from, from wider Christianity as well. What does it mean for us today and what does the temple mean and how can we, like President Veazey says in his visit in this video, in this new video, how can we go deeper and what does the temple mean today for theology? I, like I said earlier, as a seminarian in a, in a seminary that has over 25 denominations represented, I see people's eyes light up whenever they hear about what are churches doing about what our church is saying.

- Neil: [01:07:50](#) In fact, last advent, I was asked to take part in an advent service at our seminary chapel and we were asked each and every one of us who spoke, we're asked to highlight our denominations heritage. And it was a wide variety of, of members of the wider Christian movement represented. And I decided to use Doctrine and Covenants and I talked about how God, the eternal creator is weeping for the poor. And just to see like what this movement has to offer to how so many people are seeking. How can we prayerfully respond and how can we go deeper? How is the Temple calling us to go deeper and our own lives wherever we are. Some people will never have the opportunity to get to Independence, Missouri and see this building. But how can the concept of what this building is calling us to do, of the energy that is behind it, that we have put into it, how can this lead us forth in mission to the world as the hands and feet today of Christ? So those are my thoughts. And I asked myself personally like, what does the Temple mean to me? And I think that like all theology, like all encounters with God, with the divine creator, that this is ever expanding. I often think of our beloved hymn. We limit not the truth of God. And it says the end, the Lord's still half more lightened truth to break forth from God's word. And I think that the Temple really cause us to that, to that sentiment. So those are my thoughts for myself.
- Brittany : [01:09:32](#) Yeah. And I feel like a broken record, but I just really appreciate your perspective and your ability to see Community of Christ and our beliefs and, and thoughts about Temple for what they are. I think that you've been in a unique position, again coming into the church and then being in Kirtland and then being in Independence in such a short amount of time that you've been able to really follow that trail of history and then of trail of mission and then into the future, which I think is really important.
- Neil: [01:10:06](#) Yeah. And to understand how it's intrinsically intertwined, we cannot separate one from the other, but we can be informed by our mistakes and from our triumphs.
- Brittany : [01:10:16](#) Yeah, exactly. It's liberating and grace-filled and I love it. So thank you. Anything, any other final thoughts that you'd like to leave us with?
- Neil: [01:10:28](#) I feel like we have skipped over so much. There's so much to say about,
- Brittany : [01:10:34](#) I know!



- New Speaker: [01:10:34](#) I love it. I think truthfully, what needs to be, and I know we've talked so much already, but I think what needs to also be expanded upon is the idea of worshipers path and what that means as sacred journey. It's not just all this Temple is calling us to a people of peace, but every single thing you see as intentional, even the lighting going all the way from starting in relative darkness and as we approached the sanctuary and beyond community to more lights, to see the grove, to experience the moment where Joseph felt that call, but also most importantly to remind us that as we enter into our own worshipers path, wherever that may lead us, wherever that takes us, that we have to pass through our own grove experience through our own mountaintop experience.
- Neil: [01:11:22](#) That leads us to the burning bush to remind us that Holy ground is found in the most ordinary of places and that God is continuously speaking to God's prophets. Our Christian religion is deeply rooted in the faith of the Hebrew forebears. Then this concept of prodigal parent and prodigal child and walking through the shadow of the cross and what that means for our own discipleship and this idea of ikebana flower and this global nature of our church to see the dark night of the soul. I had so many people resonate with that in tears to be in a sacred space that openly and publicly says it's okay to grieve. It's okay to question, in this dark night of the soul. This man is downward facing. He's cut off from this community. Next, he's lamenting. He's literally tearing this clothing and he is pouring out himself to God, becoming less of himself and more of who God has intended him to be.
- Neil: [01:12:26](#) And then finally we see transformation. The journey is not easy, but with God as, as with the spirit of God is our foundation. All things are possible, which leads us to the living water, which makes me think of conference, come drink, living water and to be brought into this, to this infinite spiral, this Fibonacci sequence that God used when God created the world. The fact that we were intentional about, about recreating God's handiwork into the architectural design, just there's so much to offer. I feel like Community of Christ is one of the best gems of Christianity. It's a hidden gem and so much offer to the world.
- Brittany : [01:13:05](#) I think so too. I think that we are one of Christianity's best kept secrets, so I'm always trying to figure out what can I do to amplify the secret of, of who we are because it's a, it's a message that I think is really relevant and timeless and will take us into the future and will age well.

Neil: [01:13:25](#) Yeah. Specifically the ending of Latter-day Seekers, so many people that I encountered this summer were fascinated by the fact that our church seeks unity and not uniformity. That there are, like you and I would always say jokingly, but I do believe this. If you have four Community of Christ members in the room, you have seven opinions and I love that. I love that I could not be a part of a movement that told me everything I had to think at the beginning of our basic beliefs say that these are conversation starters. These are not ends in and of themselves. These are, these are conversation starters. This is what unites our movement, but we are just discerning. We have agency to choose for ourselves to seek the scriptures. Do we have things in common? Yes. Many things in common in the, in the thing that I see most is the Temple, this concept of Temple drawing us together in community and worship and education in leadership. So we could sit here and talk about it all day long, but so much to say it's a beautiful story. It's a sacred story.

Brittany : [01:14:35](#) There really is. Well now this is, this interview has been everything that I was hoping it would be. So I just want to thank you and

Neil: [01:14:42](#) Thank you Brittany.

Brittany : [01:14:43](#) Yeah, spoiler alert. We might rope you on for future episodes because again, there is so much that we could keep talking about and I think that the Temple, like you said, if we've, if we think we figured it out when we haven't and I, I really think that there's so much that we could cover and so many shared experiences that that could be, that could be had. So thank you.

Neil: [01:15:09](#) In closing, I'll say specifically, I'm thinking of Latter-day Seekers in this moment to see so many people have such a wide variety of of places in their faith in the LDS movement to be able to come to our Temple and Independence and to talk about the story to talk about, especially the shared story, but going forward, it was very meaningful for hundreds of people, Brittany, to get to talk about how this represents, how this represents Kirtland and how many people were drawn to the fact that it really, you could see the light bulb turn on like, Oh, I see this is an extension of Kirtland. Now, however that is interpreted. I know some people might think, well, Caitlin was wonderful, yes, but that was just the prelude to what Nauvoo should have, would have become and what should be today. But for many people just to sit in this space that has so many possibilities, but yet is so intrinsically tied to this movement that they know so well in terms of Latter-day Seekers was just all

inspiring and humbling and so many questions about house of learning.

- Neil: [01:16:21](#) And we would, and whenever I would give these tours, I would say like we're in the sanctuary. The saints in the early 19th century were worshipping daily in the Kirtland Temple. And we continue that ministry today with our daily prayer of peace. There is worship going on daily. This idea of special services, there are spiritual formation retreats, there are people that are members and friends of the church who will come throughout the year and worship in the Temple and meditate and pray. And then also to think about the seminary. I would always talk about the seminary and how this Temple in a sense is a center place for the seminary for focus sessions for a strong sense of Christian formation and education, religious education. And then also governance. The fact the prophet themselves has an office here in the Temple, like that was so all inspiring for people.
- Neil: [01:17:14](#) And then to see Stephen Veazey by as a tour is going on and be in regular clothes. And then once he's completely out of ear spot to say, Oh yeah, there's our prophet, president of the church for people to be like, what? We just walked past the prophet president? Like it's just fascinating and I love it. I love the latter day Saint movement. I love our part that we play in it. And I love what it has done for us as a prophetic people who are inclusively seeking to be the hands and feet to gay people, to straight people, to liberal people, to conservative people to everyone. All the called. There's a place at the table. Yeah, it's a beautiful story, Brittany. It's so good to know you and to have this time with you. I can't wait to know you better in the future. I hope. I'm sure that our paths will cross in various instances.
- Brittany : [01:18:05](#) Well thank you so much and this was a really great conversation. I'm really glad that the direction that it played out. So thank you. Thank you so much.
- Neil: [01:18:16](#) This was good. It's my pleasure. Thank you Brittany.
- Music: [01:18:26](#) [inaudible].
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Music:

[01:19:22](#)

[inaudible]