

Speaker 1: [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: [00:00:32](#) [inaudible].

Robin Linkhart: [00:00:34](#) Hello and welcome to another episode of Project Zion Podcast. This is your host Robin Linkhart and today we are bringing you another edition in our series, What's Brewing, where we explore how God is showing up in the neighborhood and people of faith are living a life of mission in transforming ways. Today, I am delighted to welcome Larry McGuire of Gilbert Arizona. Larry currently serves as President of 70 in the USA and he has a focus on supporting congregational transformation, leadership, and mission. Welcome Larry, it's just great to have you with us today on Project Zion Podcast.

Larry McGuire: [00:01:22](#) Thanks Robin. I'm honored to be able to be part of the conversation

Robin Linkhart: [00:01:26](#) And listeners. I actually happen to have a video view of Larry this morning and in the part of Gilbert Arizona, he's sporting a wonderful Arizona shirt depicting the natural vegetation of Arizona, which is still in full bloom on this chilly October morning.

Larry McGuire: [00:01:47](#) That's right. We've got lots of good pollen counts. So when I go outside I can hide amongst the trees and no one will be able to see me.

Robin Linkhart: [00:01:57](#) Larry, let's take some time to help our listeners get to know you. If you could just share us a little bit about your story, how you came to be connected with Community of Christ, and also what brought you to a life devoted to fulltime ministry.

Larry McGuire: [00:02:15](#) Sure. I'd be happy to. I was born and raised in a small town in Northeast Michigan and my dad and mom, we had a farm there and still have that farm. My dad was a pastor of the congregation all of my life when I was growing up. And my, one of my grandmother's was my Sunday school teacher every single Sunday of all my life until I went away to college. And, so I was rooted in a farming community and in our faith tradition and really found myself appreciating what it meant that every time the church doors were open, our family was there. And that's just kind of the rhythm of our life. Anafter I went to

Graceland and earned a degree in education with an emphasis on public speaking debate and also rhetoric and language arts.

Larry McGuire:

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I moved to South Florida for a teaching job and spent 10 years in the classroom and a couple of different high schools and just thoroughly loved the career of education. I was part of the congregation in Fort Lauderdale, Florida as a pastor and then became what used to be known as the district president and served in a variety of roles there and began to really be captured by the ideas of hospitality in invitation. Our congregation in Fort Lauderdale had a number of transitions of selling the building to meeting in the school where I was a teacher and you know, being an elderly congregation and then transforming into more young adults and just a real incredible time of learning. And it was somewhere along that line, I was approached two or three different times about coming to work for the church. And I turned them down every time.

Larry McGuire:

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And I kept saying, no way. I'm not spiritual, I'm not religious. And there is no way you're going to make me be that way. And suddenly one day two men by the name of Jim Slaughter and Ron Yeager were in Fort Lauderdale and pulled me aside and said, "Okay, you've given us all the reasons why you don't want to apply for appointment, but we really think you need to reconsider at least putting in an application." So I did. And it happened to be at a World Conference when I had that application in my briefcase at that time. And, Jack Ergo was leading singing of the World Conference and he said to the conference, we're going to sing the song. Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord? And when you feel a response coming from you, we want you to stand. Well, Robin, I gripped onto that arm of the chair and refused to stand knowing I had that application in my brief case. And it wasn't until the last time singing the last chorus that I, I could not stop myself from standing. And so I stood and I turned in the application. I also applied for a job as an athletic director at a community college because my career path was to go be an athletic director for a college. And I had the interviews for the athletic director and also had the interviews for church appointment. And it was on the exact same day that I was offered the chance to be the athletic director and also church appointment.

Larry McGuire:

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And it was after a lot of reflecting. I remembered those days with my grandmother in Sunday school and all the conversations of my dad sitting around the table and in church, that I began to realize that actually I had been prepared for most of my life for this journey and my sense of what it means to be spiritual and religious. It was really a lack of confidence in

what I think God and others had prepared me to do. So I accepted and it's been an interesting journey now for over 25 years of serving and full time paid ministry for community of Christ.

- Robin Linkhart: [00:06:44](#) So you were raised on a farm, you grew up in Community of Christ. Your family was very involved. So you were one of those kids that was taken every time the church was open. And did you say you went to Graceland? Where did you go to college?
- Larry McGuire: [00:07:02](#) Yeah, I went to Graceland, graduated from Graceland and went right away then to Florida and began teaching
- Robin Linkhart: [00:07:09](#) Yeah. Teaching in Florida. That sounds exciting. And a goal of being an athletic director for a college. That's exciting. And then for both of those opportunities to unfold side by side. So what year was that World Conference when you had that powerful experience with Jack Ergo?
- Larry McGuire: [00:07:32](#) It would have been 1994.
- Robin Linkhart: [00:07:34](#) Wow.
- Larry McGuire: [00:07:36](#) Yeah. So I was hired, I accepted the offer for appointment and moved to Chicago in August of 1994. My assignment was to be working with the urban ministry center that we had in Chicago at that time to work with others to replant the church and in the city of Chicago. So I went from a farm and the farming community to Lamoni, which was, believe it or not, Lamoni was just a little bit bigger than the town I grew up in. Then moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. So I was in an inner city school. My mind was blown by all of that. Then go to Chicago. That was a huge transitional time for me. I graduated in 1983 and now 1994 I'm eventually becoming director of urban ministries for Community of Christ in Chicago. That's a lot of transition.
- Robin Linkhart: [00:08:30](#) That is, but you know, as you mentioned, it's so amazing how God works in our lives. And in reflecting back on our life, we can see how things were preparing us in very unique ways. So even your time teaching in inner city schools was at least a little bit of preparation before you go into urban ministries in Chicago. So Larry, you are a President of 70 and I know many of our listeners are interested by the journey of ordained ministry for disciples and Community of Christ. So just give us a little overview of how you came to be ordained and at some point along the way you became a 70. So tell us just a little bit of that

timeline of ordination and the different chapters of office that you've served.

Larry McGuire: [00:09:25](#) Sure. My first call for priesthood was during my freshman year at Graceland to the office priest. There was a new pastor in the congregation, in which I grew up and processed a call the office of priest for me. And it was a fascinating time now in my life, but also within my family dynamics. My mother was not supportive of the call, uh, felt like it was wrong for a call from the local congregation to be processed now that I'm off at Graceland and doing those things. And so she was prepared to actually vote against my call. And it was quite interesting and not out of being angry, but just the question of timing. And I had an uncle who lived in another city who was going through a really difficult divorce. And he came to church that Sunday, not knowing what was going to happen, had no, had actually been kind of distanced from the church.

Larry McGuire: [00:10:23](#) And in the business meeting when they were discussing my call, he felt the nudge of God and stood and bore witness of my call and said that actually this call was the just the beginning point of many others that would unfold and the congregation had prepared me, but that I was now being set free to give ministry in places that we won't ever really fully understand. That changed kind of the attitude from my mom. And it was powerful. Now my uncle said he had some other ideas, and insights that came to him. He's never shared those with me. So I don't know what that is. Then after I moved to Florida I had received a call the office of the elder and as we were going to discuss that at the business meeting, the gentleman who was pastor said, "Oh by the way, I'm not going to serve as pastor next year. I'm going to nominate you to serve as pastor." So I had no idea until we're walking up and dealt with my call to office of elder. And then the next order of business was to sell the church building and it was passed unanimously. So I went to be called to be pastor, a new elder, and no place to me.

Larry McGuire: [00:11:40](#) Just a fascinating time. And then it was after I began the journey of working with community of Christ. I was really intrigued by this notion of the role of missionary elder, which is not an ordained office, but it is a focus of ministry in the life of the church. And I was captured by that whole notion of what it means to be a missionary elder. And so I did quite a bit of research on that concept, interviewed some amazing people, Morris Draper and, and Don Lentz and many others of our wonderful leaders of the movement at that time and was kind of feeling this nudge to reinvigorate the passion of what it means for the office of elder to be invitation. And it was in the

midst of all that, that I was doing all that work that I also sensed there were some other things happening within me.

Larry McGuire:

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And it was in 1997 I was, I received a call the office of 70. I was living in Chicago at the time, director of urban ministries doing a lot of learning, living in neighborhoods and communities. And when the call was shared with me, one of the statements they made was, "This call has been in place for some time, but we wanted to give you the time to do the work that was necessary in the role of missionary elder to help the church understand the need for elders in mission." So I was really, really appreciative to know that there was space given for me to grow and that in that growing, there was also an opportunity to be able to share insights with the church as things moved along. Interesting. I was ordained on the Sunday after the Sunday that Princess Diana died.

Larry McGuire:

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So people were in shock, literally around the world. And several friends gathered in Chicago when I was ordained, to the office of 70. Spent time serving in that office. I had a transition of an assignment and I was called to the office of high priest, and I'll be very honest with you, Robin, it was a call to which I felt I had to accept because of my job. I really struggled with whether or not it was a call for my expression of ministry. And there were times, even after I said yes, where I may have seen glimpses of that, but deep down in my soul, it was, it felt uncomfortable. And, I served in the office of high priest as best as I could. And several colleagues encouraged me to be valiant in my witness. But you know, I needed to also recognize that in that time in a life church, the role and office and ministry of high priest is where I needed to serve. And so I did that.

Larry McGuire:

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Go ahead. I'm sorry. You were serving as a mission center president when that happened. Now I was actually, well, I was a regional president at that time and worked in the transition from regions into now what we have in mission centers. That was part of the responsibility. And the interesting thing for me is I did not deny the divinity of the call because those who sensed that call had a testimony of it. What I denied was— what I wrestled with, not really denied. What I wrestled with was did that really give me the opportunity to give the full expression of what I sensed to be God's movement in my life and to cast a new vision for the office and ministry of high priest. In 2005, I finally, Robin I was at a transition. I was really struggling with the fact that I was attending more funerals and closing congregational facilities than I was being invited for baptisms and celebrations of new life.

Larry McGuire: [00:15:52](#) And I was struggling in that reality. And I asked for some time of maybe some other decisions to be made about my ministry focus and priesthood. And the apostle that I had at that time was, was new. It happened to be Ron Harmon. And Ron said, "Well, let's pray about it". Well, that was the last thing I wanted to do. I want to just get it over with. But we prayed about it and I was released from the office of high priest, reinstated as a 70 and really began—back in 2005—this journey that I continue to be on about where is God leading us? What are the questions we need to be asking and how can we focus in on mission? And then it was in leading up to the conference of 2010 that I received the invitation to be called as a president of 70 and serve on the Council of Presidents of Seventy.

Robin Linkhart: [00:16:52](#) So you started out your church employment in urban ministries in Chicago and then elder and then you became a regional administrator.

Larry McGuire: [00:17:04](#) Yeah. In 2000

Robin Linkhart: [00:17:07](#) and then in 2005, you had that transforming transitional sense of opening yourself to a new adventure, which you may not even have fully understood in the moment.

Larry McGuire: [00:17:22](#) I absolutely did not understand. And I know Robin, what caused it? I was reading a book that was new guy I had never heard of. But I was intrigued by it, called The Missional Leader by Alan Roxborough. That book just opened up the world to me of possibilities and I didn't know what to do about it. And it was from that book that I began the conversation. I actually engaged Roxborough in many conversations that I had. I had to know some things. And I was given a lot of space by many church leaders to ask those questions and to figure out what would it mean for us to begin to ask the questions about what it means to be engaged in mission in a way that was relevant for where we were at that point in time. And so I very clearly, that was it. And his work on the passage of Luke 10, the calling of the 70 really gave me the focus that I continue to have today.

Robin Linkhart: [00:18:28](#) Wow. That's divine synchronicity as, as you release the office of high priest and reinstate as a 70. And that happened in 2007 reinstating, and that's the same world conference where you and I both became a, what was called a field missionary coordinator yoked in mission with field apostles. Yes. That three years, kind of this in-between time of the church understanding mission in a new way and, and actually kind of revisioning in some ways the role and office of 70. And in 2010 you went into the Council of Presidents of 70, which was a massive, a massive

entrance of, I think we had seven new presidents of 70 set apart that year at 2010. I was one of those and had the joy of serving with you in that council for six years. That's exciting. Okay. So that kind of brings us kind of up to now. what I really want to get into with you at this point is what you're doing now. I'm understanding that you're the project manager for an innovative transforming ministry called Discover and Live your Future. And we kind of know something about it being connected with the journey of Leading Congregations and Mission, which launched around 2012. But Larry, we want to know all the details about this. So we're looking to you to tell us how this all unfolded and what's happening.

Larry McGuire:

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After I returned from an assignment in England, I was asked if I would be partnered up in the Western USA field with kind of this beginning journey of—what does it look like for us to take what we learned with Leading Congregations in Mission, the ideas of shared leadership and engaging in spiritual practices and how are we working on hospitality and the invitation within the context of the congregation. And to begin to look at what a new phase or a new opportunity of leading congregations and mission look like. And what we came to discover was the, the power and the, what I want to say, the welcoming presence of people to use the mission prayer on an ongoing basis. The mission prayer became you know, really, really embedded in many different aspects of people's individual life and in congregations.

Larry McGuire:

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And that mission prayer then seemed to be calling us to some ideas, some new insights. And so we began to ask the question, "What does that look like?" It's, I want to be able to share with people that one of the ideas is that each new generation of followers has to determine what it looks like for them to be in relationship with God and others in their day, time, and context. And we use the experience of people who have been disciples before us to help give us an understanding of what that is. But it's our time now—as we are living—to determine what that looks like. And so we began to look at the mission prayer as a rhythm and three words stood out: awaken, risk, and bless. And so the notion is of Discover and Live your Future taking words that are now part of scripture from Section 163:1.

Larry McGuire:

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Community of Christ, your name given as a divine blessing is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go. So kind of looking at the rhythm of the mission prayer, awaken, risk, and bless and the text in 163 we

began to say, we are, we're being confronted with new questions. We're being confronted with opportunities that we don't fully understand. And we also are recognizing that there are so many different directions that, that people are always, you know, being pulled to go and give attention to. But at the core of things has been this, what do we do? We recognize our congregations are shrinking in size, participation is down, those kinds of things. One of the struggles is to recognize that our focus is not to try and preserve the gospel and not to try and fix the church, but to be able to respond today in our giftedness and context about what it means to live the rhythm of the mission prayer and spiritual transformation, relational transformation in risking new relationships, new encounters, new experiences, and also to offer blessing and to recognize the blessings of what it means to be in relationship with our neighbors.

Larry McGuire:

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And so we have worked on a process that we called Discover and Live Your Future, based on the rhythm of the mission prayer. And I suppose for me, one of the insights that I've learned so far in this journey is that we are being called to practice our way into authentic and loving community. And that requires a different set of questions. And that also requires that we cannot go into the conversation expecting we know what everything's gonna look like when it comes out at the end. Cause I just don't think we do. And another element of this is that there are people who are serving very faithfully all around the world. But let me just focus right now within the United States who are doing everything they know to the best of their abilities to be faithful disciples in, in their congregation. And when they began to realize the shift that is happening, sometimes they're not quite sure what questions to ask. So part of this journey is to learn to listen together and learn to listen for what God is saying in the midst of the neighborhood and what does it look like for us to kind of pay attention to that and risk those new opportunities. So that's kind of the overarching idea for me. And what it means to embody this entire invitation. I think God has been pushing Community of Christ to accept for a long time.

Robin Linkhart:

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I am captured by so many things that you've said, Larry, and this, this image of how we are to respond in the midst of a changing context and not a context that is just changed to a new thing. But it's changed into a new context of always changing and the sense that what you're explaining with Discover and Live Your Future is not a prescription of answers, but a process, a way of living as a faithful disciple and not just as an individual, but in community with one another. How the



mission prayer has continued to be an inspiration and you and your team. have understood, you know, these three words that jump out of that with awaken and risk and bless, And understanding that it's not trying to figure out what the right answer is. It's understanding what the new questions and the new oppprtunities are.

Robin Linkhart: [00:26:53](#) And that when we're faithful to this process of a way of living, that we know the Holy Spirit is in that and things are born out of that, but the result is not predetermined. So we don't know exactly how it looks. And in a sense it's, it's that faith and understanding that what is being born is of God. And just like children are very different one from another, that there will be diversity in what that response looks like. But in a sense it's, it's all tied together because it's tied to our relationship with God and with one another. I think it's critically important what you're saying about the significance of listening. And I like the phrase listening together because certainly it is an individual listening, our own spiritual journey with God. But in community, you know, that's so core to how we understand faith in Community of Christ, the art and practice of listening together and paying attention and then being willing to risk.

Robin Linkhart: [00:28:12](#) As you're talking, I'm just envisioning you in that 1994 World Conference where God must really working on you to be willing to risk. And I mean, you were listening and you were hearing but holding onto the arms of the chair until you finally could do nothing else but just stand up and be counted. So it's exciting. It's so, so exciting. I'm wondering if you could tell us a little bit about how you have seen the Holy Spirit working in peoples lives as a result of their participation in this adventure with God. Journeying, being open to journeying with Discover and Live Your Future. Share some stories with us.

Larry McGuire: [00:28:59](#) Sure. It's interesting that the focus, as you've already identified, Robin, has been one of the keys is this notion of listening, listening to God. And to one another that the whole idea of listening together. And we have made a decision that as a team, the first retreat we have with congregational leaders and mission centers focuses in on this whole concept of the core of listening. And the second piece is that we create some receptive space for us to be able to do that. You know, we, we are really good at having full calendars and a schedule that is always packed with different opportunities and things that we do in life, our personal life with family. And then you add on that maybe the role within the congregation if you're a part of one and career and so on and so forth. And what happens is that we began to realize it's not about making more time because we

don't have that power. But what we do have is the power to be able to create space in our rhythm of life.

Larry McGuire: [00:30:11](#) That gives us the chance to be able to listen. And in sharing with some folks in different mission centers as we've been going around, having the conversation around Discover and Live. When we spend time slowing down and just listening, it is mazing how people have begun to share more deeply and more personally than they've ever done in any of their life in the church before. People who, who have said to us, those of us who are facilitators give us some more time because what we're sharing, we need time to listen to someone. That just doesn't happen. And so I remember very clearly at a retreat in the Rocky Mountain Mission Center, people said to us, "We need more time to listen to one another." So we actually scrapped a whole afternoon session and people began to share and they shared from the depths of what it meant for them to, one, know that they could, what they shared was going to be honored and not share with anybody else.

Larry McGuire: [00:31:21](#) There was trust, there was mutuality in terms of the depth of sharing and they began to recognize that by not actually stopping and paying attention, they missed the depth of many of the relationships that they had. So they were doing that. We have some places that have said as a leadership team, we're going to stop a lot of the stuff the way we've been doing. We're going to begin with spiritual practices. We're going to move through the rhythm of practices. We'll have our agenda, but we will build space into the agenda to listen to one another, which sounds maybe like that's not as critical but the choice we make to pause, to listen to one another and to God to, to create that receptive space is making a difference in that we are not simply trying to get through things. We're actually living a different rhythm.

Larry McGuire: [00:32:22](#) And what it has done for me is I've had to continue to learn to surrender that when we are doing this spiritual practice and there is silence, it's okay to breathe in that silence and not fill it up with noise. And secondly that it is also a space that someone is trying to sometimes gain the courage to be able to speak the words that God's Spirit has put within them. And we need to give the space to allow people to be able to share that. Those are just three real simple things that I can think of immediately that have already happened in retreats that we've had across some mission centers in the, especially in the Western USA.

Robin Linkhart: [00:33:09](#) These are really profound things that you're bringing up and these words that you're using as we listen together: trust,

mutuality, depth, the willingness to live a different rhythm, a way of being together, a way of having meetings together, and creating space. The way that we respond to silence. These are really, really poignant, deep concepts. And as I'm listening to you describe what happens when we make the space to allow people time to deepen their relationship with one another. I'm, I can just hear in your words the transformation that's already taking place in people's lives as they make themselves open and willing to try living a different rhythm.

Larry McGuire:

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And you know, it's interesting, Community of Christ has not been as grounded in a rule of life or a rhythm of life or some of those practices that have actually been around for centuries. For Community of Christ that's quite new to even understand some things about Benedict's Rule of Life and yet yet they've been around for centuries. Here's what I'm trying to appreciate and understand. That it's not always about the new book and it's not always about the new video, that sometimes it is actually about revisiting the things that are ancient and then saying to ourselves, what does this call for me to embrace in my life, in my day, in my time so that we, we are blessed by the experience of the centuries. But we're saying, how do I apply that today?

Larry McGuire:

[00:35:13](#)

And that is, that's exactly what Jesus kept saying throughout all of scripture. "You understand these concepts this way from your faith tradition. And I am not saying those things are wrong, but here's what I'm asking of you today, right now". And so when we look at things like in Acts and Luke, when he's trying to paint this picture about how things have been done and, and I, I love this idea that in Luke 10 everything changes. And Jesus said, "You thought it was about this, but here's what I'm telling you to do. I want you to go into the town and spend time. I want you to move into the neighborhood. I want you to understand their rhythm of life." And Robin, I think you and I have talked about this in different meetings that actually in many, far too many places where we currently have facilities where the strangers in the neighborhood, not the people who live there. We go to a building and we are totally strangers. This is about a rhythm that says we will learn what it means to live in the midst of the neighborhood. And, and sometimes folks say, well, what about our church building? Or what about, you know, we've got to make sure we maintain this. And that's a mentality about it's either/or.

Robin Linkhart:

[00:36:30](#)

yeah. Hmm.

- Larry McGuire: [00:36:31](#) Now, I believe that today we are being asked to live in the tension of both/and. That there is relevance in our neighborhoods. There's, there are things happening where God is moving in the places where we live and we don't have to leave those places in order to be engaged in the Kingdom of God in that place. In the community of God happening. But there are others who choose to want to be part of that existing congregation. Then there is another path that we would explore about what it means to have radical hospitality and invitation in that particular place so that we embrace both/and, and not have competition either/or
- Robin Linkhart: [00:37:17](#) Yes, getting away from binary understandings of things can just explode color and dimension in our lives and this fact that, you know, Community of Christ has been on such a wild adventure with God and we really have transitioned from a sense of being works-based in our theology and practice and shifted into a grace-based understanding. And that journey of course opened our minds and our doors of learning to embracing the greater Christian Tradition and even further back then the birth of Christianity in our world. And to understand the deep, deep roots, which bring these beautiful, timeless truths and practices. And yet in the gospel, good news of Jesus calls us to incarnate that in our very own flesh and blood in every generation, no matter where we live, what color we are, what culture we delight in. I adore this phrase you use "Live in the tension of both/and." And I, you know, that is such a 21st century relevant way of looking at our reality that we don't have to excuse the that's, and that's a liberating thing, Larry, I think.
- Larry McGuire: [00:38:47](#) Hmm, sure. And that is, I think, part of I know you're aware of this, but there are several authors and what are called Missiologists, people who study mission of faith and communities who have talked about this notion of the great unraveling. And it's kind of this pulling out of the threads of everything that kind of held things together. And Alan Roxborough, who's said maybe this great unraveling is what the Holy Spirit is doing and that it's okay for us to accept that some things are going to need to change. And I believe that one of the blessings of this, this part of our stewardship of mission is that we need to have the courage to have imagination. That if we are only going to look at the future with the lens of trying to maintain that which we already have and not begin to imagine what in the world God would actually be up to in other ways and other forms we miss, I think, the opportunity for God's Spirit to be able to be more active and present.

- Larry McGuire: [00:40:04](#) And we're enjoying God in that particular idea. And that imagination is something that is, it's lost in many places and it's also the opportunity to go ahead and experiment, to have some courage to innovate. So, you know, uh, what does it look like for us to be able to gather in a, in a space that's you know, public space and, and gather in there and, and talk about real life issues. And to have a rhythm of listening together, maybe a prayer having conversation on a particular topic and being able to say that this is the example of what it means to be sacred community right now. And to, to re envision, and this is another piece that I don't have all worked out yet. But I have this idea that whenever we gather in community, we will gather around the table.
- Larry McGuire: [00:41:02](#) And, that means that our spaces of gathering must be relational, not set up for just education, relational space to see one another relational space, to be able to encounter one another's presence in a physical way. And, how the table binds us together, not so much because it's always around the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but actually because it is hospitality, abundance and also that the very nature of what God has been saying to humanity, "Take me with you and when, when you go into whatever experience in the neighborhood, take me with you or don't be surprised if I'm already at the table waiting for you to show up." And that is the world of both/and not either/or.
- Robin Linkhart: [00:42:01](#) You've had a lot of years in discipleship and ministry and you've seen a lot of changes in the world and in the church. And especially in these most recent years as you've been willing to be open to new paradigms. Imagination, experimenting, being in a context and culture of mission that the changes, I mean, we live in a world of change. So Larry, as you've had that experience and also been a minister and a disciple, a faithful disciple during that time, can you help us understand maybe some principles of mission or key dimensions of mission that you see maybe kind of consistently playing out as you support mission that could help us understand just some of those important dynamics about how, how we live mission and today's world?
- Larry McGuire: [00:43:11](#) Sure. So I'm one of the, one of my learning moments was doing some study of, of a passage of scripture around Moses encountering the burning Bush. And one of the translations of that particular passage says that it was when Moses went beyond the edge of the wilderness, that he encountered God in the burning Bush. And as I began to think about it is this notion of into the wilderness that God has been calling people all along

Moses beyond the edge of the wilderness. What about John the Baptist who was in the wilderness and invited people out of their villages and cities into the wilderness to be able to say, "Prepare if there's someone else who's coming?" Jesus was driven into the wilderness. And so this whole notion for me about wilderness is that it is about a place of encounter, but it's also a place of sacrament and a place of grounding.

Larry McGuire:

[00:44:15](#)

So that idea of the wilderness in mission, used to be frightening to me because I wanted to know what to expect, when to expect it, and how I was going to be able to control the outcomes. One of the principles that I live with and don't always understand is that in the wilderness it is a place of encounter. So how do I, how am I being prepared to encounter God in the midst of the wilderness and then to pay attention that when I'm there that is sacred too. It might not be the literal burning bush, but yet when I'm having a conversation with someone who is wanting to know more about their, their journey, my journey, so on and so forth, that is sacred. And also in order for me to be present in the wilderness, I must be grounded in the relationship that leads me into the wilderness, which is my relationship with God.

Larry McGuire:

[00:45:15](#)

So the spiritual formation is critical. Another element for me is that not everyone has a comfort level to be engaged in mission of a whole neighborhood. The beauty and blessing of those who would be considered introverts is a very important learning for me. And that is the power of paying attention to one. And that we honor people who are quiet or who feel like what their particular gifts and strengths are, is to have the depth of one or two relationships and go very deeply and not be, not feel like they're a failure if they can't share their invitation with 30 people. Sometimes it's just the one. So spiritual formation to ground me and my relationship, expectations of the encounter, recognizing that that's sacred, and the blessing of your giftedness as whoever you are, however God, however God has created you to be: the introvert, the extrovert, so on and so forth.

Larry McGuire:

[00:46:25](#)

All of those are principles that I continue to wrestle with, Robin, to be honest with you. And then finally to come back around is this, I was created to be in relationship and that means community. And so when we are so captured and when we are bombarded by "it's about me, my needs and my relationship with Jesus and whatever you do is not my concern." That is contrary to the invitation of the Gospel and definitely contrary to what God has been sharing with Community of Christ. Our blessing is not that we have a missionary. Our blessing is that

we are community together, welcoming, sending out, a blessing, struggling together. That community is the ultimate expression of what it means to be in relationship with God. So as I've tried to work on those ideas, it has led me down the path of many, many questions, but I keep coming back to the practices, the relationships, appreciating my gifts, the sacredness of that moment, and how does that lead me into community?

Robin Linkhart: [00:47:46](#)

That's a lot of really great stuff you just shared. I like it. This is kind of a similar question, but it can be helpful, especially for those of us that are just beginning. And like you said, it's similar to, you don't have to invite 30 people, it's fine to focus on one or two. So as we're beginning and maybe taking baby steps, what tips do you have for people who want to engage in mission and the places they live in serve? And remember they might not be up to eating the whole elephant in one meal.

Larry McGuire: [00:48:25](#)

Exactly. So I for me, I began once again with doing some experimenting with spiritual practices. We at Discover and Live Your Future. Some of the next steps we work on with individuals and groups is to say the mission prayer every day. And then what does it look like for you to pray the mission prayer at, at regular intervals throughout the day? "God, where is your spirit leading today?" And then at midday: "God, where has your spirit been taking me a day?" At the end of the day, "God, where did your spirit go with me today?" Just to begin that practice of, of, of, of praying the prayer as we go through to develop that rhythm. Try the spiritual practices. What does it look like for you to do the modified Prayer of Examen. There are just a multitude of spiritual practices that are available to folks. So I say begin with the spiritual practices.

Larry McGuire: [00:49:28](#)

And the second element is to go into the the gathering places in your neighborhoods and just listen, listen to some of the stories that are being shared and listen to and pay attention to the rhythm of, of how people are coming and going and so on and so forth. Let me share with you one example. I went to a coffee shop that's real close to my house and I hadn't been there in some time and I walked in and I was totally disoriented because they changed the menu and the seating was all different. And the table that I used to have was now gone. I was totally disoriented. I stood at the counter and I wasn't even sure what in the world I needed to do to order. And I finally kind of fumbled my way through and there was a couch. And so I went and sat at the couch, not at the table.

Larry McGuire: [00:50:23](#) I normally sit at. And I just sat down. I felt this anxiety within myself, Robin, because I was, it just wasn't familiar. And I sat there and I was trying to think about my day and work that I needed to do and do some reading. And a woman sat on the couch next to me and she let out this deep sigh. And I was like, Hey, this is my couch that I'm trying to gain as my space right now. I don't know what's going on, you know, but she let out this deep sigh. And I thought, okay, that's a little bit interesting. She got a phone call and I was waiting for my order and my order came and I heard her say, "are you sure?" And she became very emotional and I thought, Oh, now what's going to happen? You know? She hung up the phone and I could tell that she was, had been crying and she said, I'm sorry, I just got bad news.

Larry McGuire: [00:51:20](#) And I said, I'm sorry that you got bad news. Is there something that you want to share with me? And she said, "I've just been diagnosed with stage four cancer now." I was totally disoriented and in that moment on the couch when I was trying to feel my way into this space, a woman comes in that's got a whole bunch of other stuff. I spent the rest of the morning just listening with her, not trying to fix but listening. And it was in the disorientation that I was experiencing, I found a new orientation, which was pay attention to the one in front of me. So spiritual practices, paying attention, and listening are keys, I believe for me, in how people can begin. And it's not listening to fix. It's listening to be present and honor what God is doing within them. And more often than not, it feels like I'm always in the wilderness.

Robin Linkhart: [00:52:26](#) That's a powerful story, Larry. And it really illustrates in a very real way, in the context of your life, of the power of spiritual practices, the power of paying attention even in those moments of disruption, and listening, not to fix listening, not to fix, but to be present and honor what God is doing in the life of another. Wow. Thank you for sharing that. I'm going to ask you one other question. Larry, what are your hopes for the future of Community of Christ for this particular people of faith as you kind of look into the future? A future that without without a doubt is uncertain and we don't have clarity about in many ways, but we certainly understand God's dream for the world and we certainly have a deep sense of call to respond. What are your hopes for us as a people?

Larry McGuire: [00:53:39](#) I've been thinking about that quite a bit, Robin, because as we continue to be in transition within our own community of faith, specifically, which is part of a massive transition that is going on within Christendom and that upheaval that is happening, I want



to continue to be tethered to the notion that the Kingdom of God is not being threatened by this time. But actually what we're being invited to do is to have hope that at this intersection right now what the gospel is calling us to. And so much of what culture is struggling with and trying to, to honor people's giftedness and individuality. And all of the expressions, intentions around culture. We find ourselves as disciples at that intersection. And that's not a new idea, but the hope is that we will have the courage to imagine and to be innovative about ways in which we will embody the presence of God in our day and time.

Larry McGuire:

[00:54:54](#)

And that we will not be hampered by this notion of nostalgia. But rather we will be courageous in exploring new relationships, new opportunities. In many ways I want us to be entrepreneurs of mission. I want us to, I envision us trying experiments about what it means to gather in a park on a Saturday afternoon and practice yoga together and have a cold drink together and that be my expression of sacred community that be part of worship experience that we have the courage to understand what it means to embody, that incarnation. And sometimes I think folks feel like the incarnation is in competition with innovation. Actually incarnation is innovation. It's, it's part of that relationship. And also Robin, that I would have the grace to know that I don't always understand— the ways in which God's Spirit is moving. But it's not up to me. To determine that I am to be faithful in following the promptings of God's Spirit and trust as others envision and can see what is happening or wanting to experiment with ways— that I will be a disciple who listens and supports those who have the courage to dream God's dream. But that takes, that takes some courage.

Larry McGuire:

[00:56:34](#)

I just have one story I want to close with. It's come to me and I hope we have time for it. My wife goes, my wife gets up at 4:30 in the morning to go to work. So the coffee pot goes off at 4:30. When she comes downstairs, it's ready to go. She gets her mug and off to work she goes. And I come downstairs when I wake up and I came down one morning and, uh, the coffee pot was empty. It was hot, but it was empty and I was automatically cranky with Amanda. What in the world did she drink? The whole pot of coffee before she left? And as I looked at it, I recognizes the water was still in the tank and I looked at the top and the beans were still in the top.

Larry McGuire:

[00:57:17](#)

It didn't grind the beans, it didn't put the water through, but it got hot and I had to figure out what to do and I had to take all the beans out of the tray and get rid of the water and that kind of stuff. And I realized Robin, that there were beans that were

wedged underneath the grinder and the shoot that the ground coffee goes through was totally blocked. The coffee pot tried to do its job, but it was blocked with old grounds and beans were stuck under the grinder. I did take it all apart, clean it all out. And when I did that, it was able to function as a coffee pot again. But I had to do the work to create the space for it to be able to do what it was designed to do. That is the coffee pot to grind the beans to push the grounds through and to make coffee.

Larry McGuire: [00:58:14](#) So much of life is always jammed up. The shoot is always full and there are beans that are just stuck under there. And if we don't have the courage to clean it out to, create that space, we cannot be the disciple that God created us to be because we are so full of everything else that we thought was more important. So part of my dream is that we will have the courage to clean out the shoe and make the space for God's Spirit to be able to percolate and brew and give us new vision for how the kingdom is made real here today.

Robin Linkhart: [00:58:52](#) And Larry that is an absolutely perfect story to share on Project Zion Podcast with a tagline of The Restoration Caffeinated and on our series, What's Brewing? That will be an image for sure. We've talked about a lot of things today. Is there anything else that you want to say that maybe I didn't ask you about?

Larry McGuire: [00:59:19](#) We are, we are in this conversation Robin, not because anyone has done something wrong or that the church finds itself with a bunch of questions, but I believe it's because God is doing something with us. And we are trying to understand what that means and those questions. So for all of those folks who have given all of their life to the Restoration, who faithfully show up for everything, who generously share of all of their resources, thank you. And for those who are pushing all of our buttons to say, yes, but what about and how can we thank you for that? Because it is that, all of that coming together that creates sacred community. And I'm grateful for those because I'm trying to understand what it means to be a both and disciple not an either or and have courage.

Robin Linkhart: [01:00:11](#) Yes, gratitude abounds for all the generations who've gone before as well as those emerging in new leadership now, which really, honestly, all of that mixed together creates a little bit of the tension of the both/and. Right?

Larry McGuire: [01:00:30](#) Absolutely. Absolutely.

Robin Linkhart: [01:00:33](#) Well, Larry, thank you so much for being with us today. You have shared some really powerful stories and given us a window through which we've been able to see Discover and Live Your Future and to understand not only the possibilities in the project that you're working on, but this enormous opportunity and potential and possibility of how we can embody the presence of God and our time. I also want to give a very special things to all of our listeners. If you would like to hear more about stories of mission, make sure to check out our What's Brewing series. If you have questions for our guest, Larry McGuire, you can email him at [lmcguire@cofchrist.org](mailto:lmcguire@cofchrist.org) and if you want to learn more about the Discover and Live Your Future project, you can check out the website at [www.missionalleaders.org](http://www.missionalleaders.org) that's M I S S I O N a L L E a D E R s.org. This is your host Robin Linkhart and you are listening to Project Zion Podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time. Bye bye.

Speaker 1: [01:02:07](#) [inaudible].

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Speaker 1: [01:03:07](#) [inaudible]

Speaker 5: [01:03:10](#) [inaudible].