

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

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

Music: [00:32](#) [inaudible].

Linda Booth: [00:33](#) Welcome to the third episode of coffee buzz. My name is Linda Booth. I'm retired after serving nearly 22 years as an apostle and director of communications for Community of Christ. And if you've listened to Coffee Buzz, you'll know that this podcast isn't about bees or coffee. It features an intimate conversation with a member of community of Christ first presidency. And I guess that that in and of itself maybe is what the buzz is about is the conversation. Today I'm talking with Community of Christ president and prophet Steve Veazey. Welcome Steve.

Steve Veazey: [01:14](#) Thank you. Glad to be here.

Linda Booth: [01:16](#) It's good to have you. As I was driving into the temple this morning and looked at the gauge on my car saying 34 degrees, I thought about you in fishing. Do you have any chance to fish anymore this year?

Steve Veazey: [01:28](#) Um, probably not this year, but I did have opportunity over the summer. I went to a reunion in Colorado called the Adventures Reunion and I was asked to do a class on fly fishing, which suited me really well.

Linda Booth: [01:49](#) Is that the first time you've had that opportunity?

Steve Veazey: [01:54](#) Yes.

Linda Booth: [01:54](#) And I did a lot of people show up?

Steve Veazey: [01:55](#) A few, yes. But then afterwards, Cathy and I were able to stay in the, um, in Colorado and I took some time to go to streams that I've become familiar with over the years and fly fish.

Linda Booth: [02:11](#) Nice. Very nice. Well, hopefully the winter won't last too long and fishing would be closer than it appears to me now. I also was thinking about what a typical day in the life of a prophet and president might be. And from your smile, I know that the answer is there's no typical day, but does it begin in a certain way? I mean, do you have a rhythm for a day?

- Steve Veazey: [02:38](#) It, there really is no, no typical day because there's so many different dimensions to the role. For example, on the president side, there are days that are primarily office based where I'm tending to issues and needs. Often in consultation with my colleagues in the presidency, we consult and collaborate a lot as we attempt to address issues and, and make decisions. Other days I may be meeting with world church leaders in various quorums and, and orders where we also try to have a lot of discussion and collaboration as we talked about challenges and opportunities and significant questions before the church. And that's all in an attempt to hopefully discern together and build consensus together as leaders, which is our goal and our style, so to speak, in terms of leadership. Uh, other days involve a lot of travel. I'm on the move because I know it's important to be available and present to the church throughout the whole world and to be listening very carefully to how people are talking about the church and the gospel. And often I get a sense of, uh, direction of listening carefully for God's guidance in the voices of the community. And that's very important to me. So really not a typical day, but most days for me again with some quiet time and some exercise. Sometime the travel disrupts that and different schedules on a daily basis may cause me to have to adjust my schedule, but I tried to tend to both spiritual and physical health.
- Linda Booth: [04:59](#) Yes. And I know that blesses you, but it also blesses the church as well. So if you had to describe your primary role as Community of Christ prophet president, can you even even be specific about what that primary goal er role might be?
- Steve Veazey: [05:19](#) I've thought about that a lot over the years. And I think my primary role is to be a constant reminder to the church of the churches call to be prophetic and, and visionary. And I try to demonstrate how to do that so that it causes the church to engage in those processes as a worldwide community of, of faith. So for me, my primary role is to always be calling the church to faithfulness to its mission. Always urging the church to be future facing as a prophetic community and always be urging the church to be responding to its best understanding of God's vision and, and activity in the world. Sometimes all of that involves describing current realities so that people will understand fully the circumstances in which we're called to provide ministry and, and witness. Other times that involves lifting up possibilities for the future, including my sense of divine guidance for the movement and trying to find words and phrases and expressions which help people connect to that and embody that.

- Linda Booth: [07:09](#) So you talked about future looking and so can you describe what that means, futuristic is that, what were you're referring to?
- Steve Veazey: [07:19](#) Well, it's too always in from my perspective to not be just looking back at our history because that already is, but we're going into the future. And so we need to be engaged in conversations, prayerful reflection, our own discernment group, discernment of the future that God has in mind for the church. And then to be aligning our lives with it. It's so easy just to kind of settle in and live off of what was, and often that becomes sentimentality and it can cause us to stall as a community of faith. So the, the hard work but necessary work and ultimately very fulfilling work of discernment causes us as a church to continue to move. And we often refer to ourselves as a movement rather than an organization. And I think that's, that's appropriate.
- Linda Booth: [08:37](#) It is because it's easy to get comfortable to just be comfortable in the place that you know about rather than think where God is calling you to something different.
- Steve Veazey: [08:48](#) Yes.
- Linda Booth: [08:49](#) Yeah. So how, how does God's nature fit into, does earning, uh, is there anything that future that challenges us maybe to dream and then to live it?
- Steve Veazey: [09:01](#) Well, I think some of the basic characteristics of God include steadfast love and freedom. God is free in God's love and a goal of God is to love us into freedom as co-creators with God in the world. Whenever I think about that, I'm often drawn to a scripture passage in Isaiah chapter 43 verses 18 through 20 and I'll read it, "Do not remember the former things or consider things of old I am about to do a new thing now it Springs forth, do you not perceive it?" So I, I believe that it's part of God's nature to always be involved in this creative activity of doing a new thing in response to human circumstances and the nature of creation itself. And so our role, I guess is one way to describe it is to be open to perceiving that, understanding it. What's curious about it? What is the new thing that I can see that God is doing or about to do? It's, it's an exploration, a spiritual exploration because I think it's God's nature to do that. I remember him that Barbara Higdon wrote titled creation flows unceasingly in the first verse of that is, I don't know that I'll quote it exactly, but Creation Flows Unceasingly from out of the timeless mind of God. So it's almost like Gods being in love and freedom is to be this eternal artist and creator who is always

doing new things in the world, sometimes not in very apparent ways and it's almost like God delights when we discover where God is planting some seeds and we can nurture him or God is involved in a new thing that we can then align our lives and resources with.

- Linda Booth: [11:54](#) We had talked about the co-creation that humans are with God in that the purpose to make the world in God's image or to bring that vision to all people, and as I've been organizing my books, I came across a little book that Karl Bart wrote. It has three essays in it. I think the book's called The Humanity of God. And he wrote that God exists, speaks and acts as the partner of man and women. And he addresses what you were talking about, God's divine freedom, saying that God chose and in fact wants people to be God's partners, which is when you think about it. If I was God, I would be sort of more orchestrating things and not depending upon.
- Steve Veazey: [12:43](#) The temptation would be there.
- Linda Booth: [12:45](#) It would be! Not to be depend upon humans in their frailty and their distractions. But that God, he wrote something like we all participate in it as persons responsible for it. And, and that just startled me for a second because that word responsible has an accountability to it. So, so if God really depends upon men and women and boys and girls and to, to engage in this responsible action, then we are as partners, God asks us to be creative in the activity for the future.
- Steve Veazey: [13:29](#) That aligns with, with my perception of how God is. I would probably put it in these words, God, in God's freedom chooses to trust us and engage us because that's how we grow spiritually and increasingly reveal God's image in us. And I think that's right at the heart of our faith and basic beliefs. So very early in the restoration movement, there emerged a clear emphasis on agency or human agency. We see that term appearing time and time again. We also know there was a lot of debate going on at that time. Are humans really free to choose or is everything just predetermined and gonna play out according to a divine plan? And the restoration perspective on that was no, we are human agents of God. And that is not just about freedom of choice, it's about responsible choosing and action, which is what you were saying about there's an element of responsibility to this and accountability.
- Steve Veazey: [15:02](#) So I think about in Community of Christ Doctrine Covenants section 58, it emphasizes that we shouldn't wait to be commanded in everything. And I'm paraphrasing a bit, but that

we should do many things of our own free will and accomplish much good because the power is within us because we are agents and the concept of agency says that we manage our lives, our resources, our relationships for and with God. We are created to bear the God image in our lives and in our behaviors. And that means yes, there is a responsibility there and an accountability to God for the resources and opportunities that are inherent in our lives and the freedom to choose to respond to God or not. And there's a responsibility that comes with not choosing to respond to God too.

- Linda Booth: [16:31](#) Yes. And it goes to one of our Enduring Principles, obviously a responsible, responsible choice. Yes, yes, yes.
- Steve Veazey: [16:38](#) And that's what is being expressed in that phrase. It's not just, I'm free to choose it. I'm called to make responsible choices as a steward or as a partner with God. Yes. In the transformation of creation.
- Linda Booth: [17:03](#) I love the idea of being in partner co-creating with God. All individuals are called into that role because for me, that explains God's great love. And trust in humanity that God created us in such a way that God knows we have the capacity to be that loving humanity that may make changes in the world.
- Steve Veazey: [17:32](#) And as we do that, we grow spiritually, becoming more centered in God's Spirit that is in and throughout all of creation, which fulfills, I think, the of our creation.
- Linda Booth: [17:51](#) Yes. It just, the thought of it gives me this sense of joy in God's love for all, all of creation. So even as we talk about our role and responsibility and responsible choices, what is our role as members, disciples of Jesus Christ, community of Christ, members and friends in this infinite creative activity?
- Steve Veazey: [18:21](#) Well, I think it's our role is to be continuously discerning, divine being and presence in the world and to be constantly aligning our lives with it and to be inviting and encouraging others to do the same. Sometimes or often it's hard for people to see that if they are not sensitive to it and it's difficult for them to understand, but if they are engaged in the community that is discerning, then they begin to pick up the perspectives and habits, practices, I think we can call them spiritual practices that help them begin to see also, and so out of that community grows, a movement grows and things bend into direction of God's, of God's will. So I often tell people, look for where justice and peace is beginning to emerge and that's where God is engaged. That's evidence of God's ongoing infinite creative

activity to bring about God's realm of justice and peace. Look for those who are the helpers. Look for those who are trying to build bridges of understanding where there are walls of division and see where God is active and engaged and go there and lend a hand. I think sometimes it's as basic as that.

- Linda Booth: [20:21](#) It's also as basic as something my grandmother taught me as a little child is that God is all around you. If you just pay attention, attention, you just look. If you just are watching, always watching for yeah.
- Steve Veazey: [20:38](#) Yeah, we, we see what we're looking for. Yes. Uh, not just in our imagination, but actually if we're looking for God in small and routine activities, we'll see the divine presence there.
- Linda Booth: [20:57](#) And she was really good about seeing the divine activity in individuals and actually giving it voice and name for those individuals so that they also saw that God was actively involved in their life even though they weren't aware of it. And then then to then to be captured by the understanding that there are others in the community and then the neighborhood who are doing the justice peace focus, then linking with them that, that there's a lot of power in that kind of lifestyle.
- Steve Veazey: [21:33](#) Yup. And I think it all moves towards engagement, relationship and community as God's way of bringing about God's purposes in the world.
- Linda Booth: [21:47](#) I would agree. I know you've read the book, the prophetic imagination. Many of us I have. And Walter Brueggemann wrote that the task of prophetic ministry or imagination is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us. Now that's kind of, we probably need to unpack that cause that's pretty dense. But he goes on to say that recognizing the alternatives when we're immersed in the dominant culture is very difficult for a community of faith. And so how do we release prophetic imagination in our lives and be prophetic ministers of formation and reformation of alternative communities?
- Steve Veazey: [22:41](#) Wow. That is a mouthful. And it's an important concept. Brueggemann's concept of prophetic imagination. He's not just talking about wishful thinking or daydreaming. He's talking about how the Holy Spirit interacts with us to create in our minds and hearts a vision of a reality that's more aligned with God's nature and will and, and purposes. And once we perceive that and are captured by it, I think, as I've said numerous times

before, we can start living in that reality and thus help bring it in to be. But it's so difficult when we're immersed in the way things are and the cultural trends are pressing on us to see that that's not the way things have to be. Um, so the challenge is always to create time and, and space and conversation where we can talk about what is God's dream for the world? What, what is God's vision for the world?

Steve Veazey:

[24:13](#)

How, how is that expressed in flesh in Jesus Christ and his life and ministry? And then, uh, to engage with God in each other and saying we see a different way of being in the world. And that that's one of the primary callings of the church is to bring some visible witness to that different way of being. We don't have to live in a world of conflict and violence. The church can offer an experience with community that upholds the worth of persons and that giftedness of all persons. And so as we do that, we are expressing our understanding, our prophetic depiction of God's will. And I think it's at the core of our life together in the church. It's, it's why we constantly emphasize discovering your future, discovering our future like we just did at World Conference. Discover. There has to be a sense of adventure and, and openness. So, but I really like Brueggemann's phrase prophetic imagination, imagination and take it as a personal challenge. It's, it's not enough just to be speaking against the way things are cause that just doesn't accomplish much. But we need to hold up. Here's how it can be. And I think then we begin to create the future as God would have it be.

Linda Booth:

[26:14](#)

Well, as you were talking, I was thinking of about a man that you and I both know, Garland, who he, his prophetic imagination and, and ministry actually saw an injustice in communities with payback payday loan. And he actually discerned his call on that. And he had groups of people who organized and, and made legislative issues in the state of Missouri because he saw an alternative to the present cultural standards of what was fair and just for people.

Steve Veazey:

[26:51](#)

Exactly. And that, that's a great example of an individual engaged in that discernment as an expression of prophetic imagination. It doesn't have to be this way, it can be a better way. And, and Garland also then began, began to engage people around him to increase the impact and the likelihood of, of making a difference. And he still very passionate about that and continues to do it.

Linda Booth:

[27:21](#)

And he's made a big difference too in the state of Missouri. And, and while you were talking to also thought of a woman, we both named Helen who lives down in Mobile Alabama in the 60s

she worked for an insurance company and discovered that they were charging African Americans more for insurance than they were for white folks. And she actually went to her boss and said, this is wrong. And he said, well, this is how it is. And she wrote a letter then up the chain and the courage that she had, she could have lost her job and her family needed her job at that time. And she made, they made, they changed it because of one person, prophetic imagination and courage and courage.

Steve Veazey: [28:10](#)

I think that's a good point. A prophetic imagination often calls us to be courageous in the face of dominant trends. And the way things are. And that's true throughout scripture. We can see individuals who once perceiving God what God's doing in the world and the possibilities that it took courage to line up with that and to call others to come with you. But that's how transformation occurs.

Linda Booth: [28:41](#)

It does occur that way. So we've been taught that we're made in the image of God spiritually formed in the image of God. And the close connection between the word image and the word imagination gives me hope that God is in the midst of our discovering the future. So any closing thoughts or testimonies about community of Christ future?

Steve Veazey: [29:09](#)

Well, I think it was a Eleanor Roosevelt who said the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. And I believe passionately that Community of Christ has a beautiful dream, a beautiful dream of the true nature of God, a dream of what the world would like if we implemented all the dimensions of Christ's witness and, and message and Christ mission, which was very much focused on the plight of those who are suffering, uh, injustices in the world. And, and the building of inclusive community. We have a beautiful dream of the worth of persons and ways in which that can be brought to expression. And I think we've come to that dream through our story and our, our journey of constantly seeking God and having our eyes open, of releasing ourselves from current trends or perspectives and always reaching for God's dream. So I guess my testimony is that I believe firmly and passionately if the church unites around that beautiful dream we will fulfill our calling and be a blessing to humankind and to all creation.

Linda Booth: [31:01](#)

Yes, I think we all have that hope and dream. Thank you Steve and thank you for taking this time to talk with the listeners of Coffee Buzz and we look forward to the next Coffee Buzz episode which will feature a conversation with President Scott Murphy. So thank you again Steve.



Steve Veazey: [31:23](#) Thank you for the opportunity.

Music: [31:31](#) [inaudible]

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