

Speaker 1: [00:16](#) [inaudible].

Speaker 2: [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.

Carla : [00:29](#) Hello and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long and you're listening to Percolating on Faith, a podcast series where we talk about all different kinds of matters of faith, everything you wanted to know and didn't want to know about theology. And I'm assuming it's mostly things you want to know. I could be wrong about that. This is actually a subset of Percolating on Faith. It's called God Shots and we're doing some systematic theology through lots of different matters of faith. And I'm here as always with by guests. Charmaine and Tony Chvala Smith. Hello. Hello.

Charmaine : [01:05](#) Hello. How are you?

Carla Long : [01:08](#) I'm just getting over a cold, gentle listener. So if you hear me do this, it's because that's why I'm so sorry about that. I'm going to try really hard not to do it right in the microphone.

Tony: [01:18](#) We want the listeners to know that if they hear that it's not from Charmaine or me, it is from you.

Carla : [01:23](#) It's definitely from me. Definitely. If you hear any other noises though, that's totally Charmaine.

Charmaine : [01:28](#) Probably Tony!

Carla : [01:32](#) So today when I was making notes about what we're going to talk about today, I wrote that we're going to be talking about the Holy Spirits. I don't know why I decided to put make it plural, but it's not because I was drinking Holy Spirits. I promise you that we are talking about the Holy spirit today and how it fits into our lives and what it does and all about the Holy Spirit. So as we were talking earlier about this and as I was thinking about it, it does seem like to me that the Holy Spirit is probably the least understood of the Trinity from the Father, Son and Spirit. We, I don't think we understand it very well at all. I, and, and I think we might be a little bit fearful of it because we can't control it maybe or because we can't figure out exactly what it does and does it just promote feelings within us. So I think this could be a really interesting podcast to learn about more about what it is and what people have said in the past about what it is.

So let's, let's just jump in about, you know, what is the Holy Spirit.

- Tony: [02:45](#) Sure. I, I think your, your reflections on that or are well born out. In fact, there's a British theologian from the 1920s and thirties and forties that I've, I'm probably, I've probably quoted before, William Temple. William Temple says that the Holy spirit is the least understood of the persons of the Trinity among Christians. But the ironic thing is that the spirit is the, the part of the Trinity we're most constantly in contact with because the Spirit, the Holy spirit is the spirit of God. It's God, the Spirit present in and through all things. The spirit that animates creation that, that in classical theology is called the life giver, the one that gives life to things. And so actually we're in contact with the Holy Spirit all of the time. And it's just that Western theology has tended to focus on the first two persons way too much. And on the third person, not so much at all. So that's kind of a weak point in our Western theology.
- Charmaine : [03:57](#) And maybe that's partly because Western thought is more concrete wanting, wanting things that can measure a name and describe in some ways. So yeah, the spirit is that element of God that we hear about even in the Old Testament. Sometimes God's presence is called the Spirit or the Spirit of God. So it's something that as Tony mentioned, is there in creation but also present in ways that people could see, could experience could rely on in difficult times and times when they had made mistakes. Anyhow, it's, it's a constant through the scriptures. Once you're looking for it
- Tony: [04:56](#) And Carla, you, you win your language about the spirit. A few minutes ago, I think you, you were attending towards the idea of like what is the spirit? But what if I changed the question to who is the spirit? How different is that when I say it?
- Carla : [05:16](#) Oh, that's a really good point. You know, that changes a lot of things for me. Like for instance, when you think of who you want to get a kind of a picture in your head of who, and I'm, I a lot of times I've heard of the Spirit being referred to in the feminine and actually most of the time I think I hear it referred to in the feminine. So that changes a lot. Is the spirit feminine?
- Charmaine : [05:43](#) Ah, ah, that's a good question. And I think it's, it's as good a question is asking is, is the source the, the part of God that we, the source or father is, is that a gender? And in a, and I think that's, it's an equally that's as equally an important question as is what is, does the Spirit have a gender? And I would say, you mean we can talk about it from lots of different perspectives. In

the Hebrew, the word that is used to indicate God's Spirit is feminine. In the Greek it's, or it's it. And in the Latin, which is the one that like the King James version would have been dependent on. It's a he and so [inaudible] so we were chatting about this earlier and it's like, well, maybe, maybe the Spirit is gender fluid. And maybe, you know, it's a, this part of, of this element of God is not able to be strictly defined by gender.

Charmaine :

[07:05](#)

In fact, I would say it's not healthy to see any of the three as tied to our particular gender definitions because whatever, whenever we use gender language, it's super dependent on the cultural definitions of the hearer rather than what was being intended initially. And so the Spirit sometimes has been seen as being equated with Sophia in the Old Testament wisdom. And you know, there's some, some good correlations there, but it's also something more than that. And so I think as with gen trying to gender any part of the Godhead, we would would say his, historically the Spirit has been more often connected with the feminine. But again, that's not to say, Oh, well we don't want to, to caricature what the feminine is either by the constructs of our culture. So, you know, we don't want to say, well, you know, the Holy spirit is, is a comfort, or because my mother was a comforter this Holy spirit is a whole bunch of other things too. And Tony was just reminding me that in the gospel of Mark in the, in the first chapter after Jesus' baptism, it's the spirit in the shape of a dove that drives Jesus into the wilderness. This is no gentle patting you on the or soothing your, you know, rubbing your arm, kind of part of God. This is one that that motivates directs and so, and it has it's own kind of power. So I don't know, it's a very long answer to your question, but it's a great question.

Tony:

[09:17](#)

To me, this is a place where the, where the, the classical kind of patristic Greek tradition of Christian theology can be really helpful in recognizing, you know, Greek, the Greek theologians like Saint John of Damascus were really very careful in their language and recognized. They recognize that all of our language about God is limited. It's all partial. God, the, the eternal Triune God is unlimited. An uncircumcised, drivable meaning our concepts cannot just somehow cover everything about them. And so at the same time, it's kind of cool once, you know, starting there, recognizing that that God is beyond all constructs, including our gender constructs. At the same time, it's kind of cool and helpful to think of the spirit of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible or the Spirit of God in the Hebrew Bible as sometimes being depicted with, with mothering characteristics.

- Tony: [10:25](#) For example, in Genesis, one of the very first few lines of Genesis, the creation story, where, where first creation story where the Hebrew text says, you know, and, and the spirit of God was hovering brooding fluttering over the, the face of the deep. So that's, it's, it's an image taken from watching birds sit on nests. And so I, I mean, I think there's, there's something to be gained from that. At the same time, limiting God to these gender categories is, is really problematic. And so we just have to, you know, I agree with totally assured him. You'd have to be somewhat careful not to, not to use these in confining or social construct reinforcing ways.
- Charmaine : [11:09](#) Right, right. And you know, I know it's awkward, but even with the Jesus part, yes, Jesus was as a human being male, but he certainly broke a lot of the stereotypes of his day about what maleness was and would today I think as well. So it's, it's not helpful to, to just to say that is the defining feature of who he is. But anyhow, that's always a fun conversation to have.
- Carla : [11:43](#) It's a really interesting conversation to have because, you know, our puny little minds want to put things into categories and it feels comfortable to put things into categories and it feels good. If, if, if we can understand the spirit, at least in that way, I do want to actually jump kind of back to a podcast we've already done and that was on the Trinity. And I wanted to ask you to maybe recap or talk to us about how the spirit fits into the Trinity, if you could.
- Tony: [12:13](#) Sure. So again, let's go, let's, let's just say that we're, we're in the realm of mystery here. We, we, we're not, we're not describing a recipe. We're, we're, we're in the realm of mystery. And when, when we start talking about the language of the Trinity we, we, we believe the language points to something real at the same time, it has sheer limits. So that's a place to start. So the, we're, we're talking about the, one God, Christianity is a monotheistic religion, but what's unique in Christianity is that Christianity's monotheism is reframed through the experience of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit. So that, so that God is always the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and the God of the Holy Spirit. In other words, father, son, and spirit to use the traditional language are not three gods, but three ways of referring to the same God.
- Tony: [13:21](#) I love Karl Bart's little formula here. God is God's self three ways. And so what that means in relation to the Holy Spirit is that the Holy spirit is not a less than not just some kind of free floating energy that has nothing else connected to it. The spirit is not, I mean, really not neither the, the Father, Son and Spirit

are not parts of God. They are God, God three ways. And so the spirit is as personal, as creative, as redemptive, as transformative, as Christ, as the father. In other words, creation, redemption, creation, redemption, sanctification, glorification, transformation. These are all the work of the one God who is 3 persons.

Charmaine : [14:15](#)

So here's one of the things that's kind of interesting about the whole long tradition within Christianity as to how we describe the Holy Spirit's relationship to the other two persons of God is that one of the, the big dividing points between Orthodox Christians, so Eastern Orthodox and the Western church, the Roman Catholic church and all of those. That, and then Protestantism is that in the, in the Eastern church and the Orthodox church, their statement of belief would indicate that both Christ and the Spirit come from the father emanate from the father. The Western church without consulting the Eastern church changed that to say that the Spirit emanates from the father and the son and this whole idea of emanations, you know, so what is the source from which the Spirit comes was a very contentious disagreement in fact caused the part of the, part of the reason for the split between the two churches. So, so Tony, go ahead.

Tony: [15:43](#)

Yeah. As I said, that the technical Charmaine's using the word emanation, which, which works stuff, the technical term is proceed. So the, in the Orthodox tradition, the Spirit, the Spirit proceeds from the father. In the Western tradition, the spirit proceeds proceeds from the father and son. Just just for listeners who were into the technical language, it's the, this is called the [inaudible] the procession.

Charmaine : [16:07](#)

Thank you. And that's not about a couple walking down the aisle. No, it's not. Okay. All right. Just checking. There's way less drama with this one. I actually just want to just toss in there that, you know, there's, there has been controversy in the Christian tradition about where does it, where does the Spirit really come from, what, what's its source? But even in the Eastern church orthodoxy, it'd be recognized that it is one of the persons of, of the Godhead, of the Trinity.

Tony: [16:41](#)

And so both traditions East and West, and this, this includes Community of Christ tradition believes that the spirit as God can be prayed to, can be adored, can be worshiped. We have hymns in Community of Christ Sings that are hymns to the Holy Spirit. In the worship traditions of the Western church, they're a great, amazing prayers to the Holy spirit. Like the, the ancient prayer of any creative spirit who's come, creator spirit come. And so

the spirit is not less than the spirit of Scott. And thus we may, we, we may start a prayer and Charmaine and I both do this. Holy spirit common blessed this gathering or something like that. And so it's definitely, we're, we're talking to God, we're just talking to God the spirit.

Carla : [17:29](#) Well, that's really helpful. I think that that's a really good recap for us, for me, especially to remind, remind myself that the spirit is not less than the spirit is equal to [inaudible], which, because, and sometimes because maybe we are focuses on Father and Son so much because they are, they seem to have more of a defined boundary. We just talk about them so much more because we understand them. I think slightly better. We probably don't, but we think we do.

Charmaine : [18:02](#) We think we do, right? There's, there's more elements of, of the church of Christian life that we designate as being related to them. And the spirit is kind of a free agent. The spirit is that element that works with individuals that works not only, you know, with stirring their minds or bringing peace or bringing inside or helping them know that they are forgiven or inviting them to, to repentance. It's, it's the element of God that, that touches people's awareness to remind them. So it's, it's, it's an inside job with the Holy Spirit that, and, and that's much harder than to either describe or prose or prescribe that that must be the way the Spirit works. Because if the Spirit is free to move as it wishes and and often in unexpected ways and in unexpected places you know, so if you've ever had a moment when you're suddenly in awe of beauty or, or you see, you look in someone's face and you see something more there, you see something of God's love or God's presence or, or you see compassion there that, that just, you know, goes right to the roots of your soul. That's the Holy spirit. I'm alive, you know, making you alive to what's around you. And it's, it's really, it's pretty sneaky.

Tony: [19:55](#) And I like what Charmaine's saying. It's, it's so one of the, one of the problems with the hyper focus on the father and the son will say that, you know, the first and second persons of the Trinity in so much of our theology is that it, it's, it's the language. It's the language of the church and church life. And so in some respects it kind of takes, it pretends to take God captive to the church, you know, but the Spirit as this free agent, which I love that image the spirit is at work everywhere always. You know, there's an early section of the Doctrine and Covenants, I forget which one it is. It's six or 10 or somewhere in there where, where Joseph, where Joseph says put your trust in that spirit, which leads to, to do justly, to do, to do, to, to walk justly, to do kindness. This is my spirit. So wherever, wherever in the

world, justice, kindness, love, mutuality concern for the poor and the marginalized where concerned for creation, whatever, wherever people are responding to that they are responding to the Holy spirit at work, in the creation. And that that gives us a kind of a breadth of breadth to understanding of God's work in the world. It keeps us from confining it somehow, strangely to just what's happening inside the church. I think.

Carla : [21:19](#) Yeah, I appreciate that very much. I, I kind of want to change the topic though. I want to go to a different place and I have two questions. And I don't, I think they go together, but you can either choose to answer one or whatever. So one of my questions is what does the Spirit actually do? If it does anything at all or maybe it just be's [laughter]. So that's one question. And the other one is, ever since I moved to Utah, I have heard this phrase that if you do such and such, you will lose the spirit. And to me, I, that sounds awful and not something that I would ever say to anyone. So, so what does the spirit do and is there in the doing, is there a way that you can lose the Spirit?

Charmaine : [22:18](#) That's I, that's funny. I, and when you say what does the spirit do? I'm thinking about the spirit with a timecard, you know, clocking in, clocking into work.

Charmaine : [22:32](#) what does the spirit do? Well, I think there's some very specific things that Christian tradition would say. One thing is that the Spirit helps us know Christ. It is that element, that clarifying of thought or heart that helps us to know Jesus to see who he is and what he can be for us individually and in the world. I think the Spirit could also be called the mm, the announcer of the kingdom, the one that helps us recognize those moments when we're experiencing something of the kingdom of God. It helps us to recognize those moments where God's power is at work around us and within us. But I think on a very personal level, it's does the heavy lifting of, I guess what we call spiritual formation. It is that which if, if we give it room and sometimes it doesn't ask for permission, it just barges in anyhow.

Charmaine : [23:52](#) It's what helps us attune ourselves to, to God, but to our own self awareness. It helps us to see ourselves. It helps remind us that we are loved. Even when we are feeling unworthy or feeling judged by other people or, or when we feel justifiably, when we feel guilt, it is often the spirit that is there to remind us that God's forgiveness is, is there for us. I mean, that was, you know, definitely true for me at one of the most pivotal experiences in my life was at a time when I was feeling very burdened with guilt. It was the spirit that brought words that someone else was saying to my heart and my mind and lifted

the sense of, of guilt and, and the fear that, that somehow God couldn't love me because of things I've done. So it, it acts as a reminder that no matter where we are and, and what we've done, that God is continually inviting us.

Charmaine : [25:11](#)

So it's, it's, it's the path creator. It creates a path for us to be reconvened and God's love. And so in that way, I would say it's, it's not frightened away at all by our imperfection. In fact, it's almost challenged by it. It's, it's the part of God that can keep working within us and around us to bring peace, to bring forgiveness, to bring assurance that we are known and accepted and loved by God and called to keep growing. So those are some of the things I would say. I think Tony's got some too. Yeah.

Tony: [25:55](#)

Those are, those are great ones. And I love the idea of the spirit doing the heavy lifting in the new Testament. Christ was raised from the dead by the spirit. That's, that's pretty heavy lifting actually to, to, to bring the, you know, the crucified Christ to life again. So in Christian theology, the Spirit is the spirit that gives life to the dead. In Paul's theology, the spirit prays in us is when we, when we lack words for prayer and even when we think we've got words for prayer, the spirit prays in us as he says in Romans eight with sighs too deep for words and intercedes for us. The Spirit is constantly interceding on our behalf. And in that respect, the idea that somehow our, our mistakes or misdeeds could chase the spirit away is, is really blasphemous. I think that this, the spirit is always present ever trying to draw us more fully into God's life and love.

Tony: [26:55](#)

And so the idea that we could somehow push it away, it gives us way more credit than we deserve. I think the, the spirit is the, Bart refers to the spirit as the teacher of the word. Meaning that scripture really is lifeless to us without the work of the Spirit to help us understand the, the short stories and the poetry and the fiction and the history and the give and take, the to and fro. In history, in scripture the Spirit is the, is the loving presence of God that's trying to guide us to better and better understandings of it. The spirit, this is where I think Migliori's chapter on the spirit is very helpful. The spirit is at work in justification, sanctification and vocation.

Charmaine : [27:47](#)

Can you please define those?

Tony: [27:50](#)

So justification is to put it simple. Justification means being, recognizing that we are accepted by God. We are loved and accepted by God. However, we come to recognize that that's justification and that's the work of the Spirit saying you, you



belong. You are somebody you, you can't make God not love you. That's justification. Sanctification which sounds kind of ponderous really is how we learn to live in the ever present love of God. The Spirit is our guide there. The Spirit, the spirit slowly transforms us as we keep trying to respond to it. The spirit is ever drawing us forward even when we stumble and make mistakes and get off track. The Spirit is ever, ever pulling us in the direction and like a Godward direction. Gosh, I've heard hundreds and hundreds of testimonials of people saying when I look back at my life at this particular point where I was all messed up, now when I look back, I see that God was already at work trying to draw me out of that situation.

Tony:

[29:02](#)

Gosh, that's the Holy Spirit at work there. And so vocation. Ameliorates third one is the spirit is the one who implants callings in us. It calls us all to the work of a declaring living in seeking to build up the kingdom of God so that that vocation gives meaning to our lives and our discipleship. We are called, we are called to be disciples. In this spirit is the power that makes that real in us.

Charmaine :

[29:32](#)

So, and it's the spot, the power that that helps us keep working on those things inside of ourselves. You know, like when we find that we're, that we're jealous or we're finding we're recognize our own greed or our want for recognition or whatever, it's, it's the spirit that helps, helps us see that sometimes recognize it, name it, but it's also the spirit that that helps us find ways to let go of some of these things and trust that God's love and acceptance of us are enough to, to tell us of our worth. Rather than us trying to prove it through the acquiring of power or stuff or other people's approval. So the spirit is, is at work in the, in the corners of our minds and our hearts. Nudging us towards a change, little steps by little steps.

Tony:

[30:35](#)

When Jesus tells the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel before he, he leaves them, I will be with you always. That being with us always, always means always. And so the spirit is the always present of God in our lives even when we mess up and the disciples constantly messed up, we, we know that we just have to read the New Testament. Thus, thus it's really, really important for us. Carla to see the Holy Spirit always as a gift in the New Testament. Constantly. The spirit is, is referred to with gift language. The spirit is poured out into our hearts. Paul says in enrollments. The spirit is the gift of the spirit that then implants gifts in our lives for the use of the common good in the community. Any, any talk about earning Spirit is really problematic because it turns our relationship with the spirit into a kind of a business deal or transaction.

Tony: [31:36](#) We do X and then the spirit will be there and give us Y no, not at all. The very, the very ability to do the X is already guided and nurtured by the Spirit. So the Spirit is the gift of God's faithful presence in our lives always. I think that's really important for us to keep in mind. And it took a couple of other things that come to mind here that Paul refers to. The spirit is the spirit of freedom. And he says in second Corinthians that, you know where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. And so structures that, that constrict and damage and harm life, those are not places where the Spirit is at work. The Spirit is at work, always trying to bring greater freedom to human beings, freedom to be our truest selves. That's, that's part of what the spirit is doing in the world.

Tony: [32:36](#) And therefore liberation theologians have really focused on this dimension of the Spirit's work, that the spirit is the spirit of liberation. And so where wherever there are people working to, to help people get free from various kinds of bondage that's the Spirit at work already. And then another thing is that the Spirit is the prophetic Spirit. This is important in community of Christ as the prophetic spirit back prophetic here. We don't mean the spirit helps us predict the far off future if that's not what the prophets did. Instead the prophets were agents, agents of the Spirit in ancient Israel to call, call God's people back to the path of justice. And so the prophetic spirit is then the Spirit that calls the church to pursue justice and equity and compassion in the world. Even if that means going against the political powers that be to do it. So the Holy Spirit's, Holy spirit is pretty, pretty busy. Yeah. Yeah. Maybe getting over time even.

Carla : [33:40](#) Good thing the Holy Spirit has a punch clock or touch, whatever it is. Yes. So I've been known to say that there is nothing you can do that will make God love you any more or any less than God already does. So it sounds like I can add to that and say there's nothing that you could do that would make you lose the Spirit or gain more of the Spirit than you already have. Is that true?

Charmaine : [34:06](#) Yup. And I would, I would probably even say it's, it's less of a commodity as, as the, the Spirit is something you can have more or less of. And maybe put it again into that idea of a presence or a relationship. That the, the nearest notice of the Spirit or the willingness of the spirit to be at work around us and within us is, can, can't be, can't be scared away that, that, that, that the Spirit is really persistent and is, is like that friend who doesn't give up on us even when we are really bad friend. Because the Spirit is w one of the aspects of God that is most convinced and most convincing to us that God knows us and loves us and finds

all kinds of creative ways to, to remind us of that and assure us of that.

- Tony: [35:14](#) I, I can think of an excellent place to illustrate this very thing. And that's if you read the whole letter of First Corinthians. So, so, all right. So the, the, the Christian community in Corinth was, how can I say this nicely? They were totally messed up. They're so dysfunctional in so many ways. Gosh, there's a member of the congregation who sleeping with his stepmother. There's male members of the congregation that are going probably to visit Aphrodite priestesses, not just to worship, actually, not just to have a chat, not just to have a chat and not just not just for pastoral counseling. The people in the congregation are suing each other in public courts. They're arguing over food and who, who can eat what. And when they're arguing over worship practices. There are people in the congregation who think they are smarter and wiser than others and are saying are more spiritual or more spiritual.
- Tony: [36:16](#) And for all that community's dysfunction, Paul's language is that they have been blessed in every way by the spirit. The spirit hasn't left them. That's the very reason Paul can call them to kind of start living up to what the spirit really is. Right? So you just have to read your way through First Corinthians, Carla, and you will, you will feel quite, quite convinced that there's nothing you can do that will drive the Spirit away. What what might happen is that there are things you can do that will, will sublimate your awareness of the Spirit's presence. But the Spirit is, is really persistent, really sneaky. And we'll find a way to remind you that you need to probably move in this direction. So I commend first Corinthians to you Carla as an example of a, a completely spiraling church that Paul says still has the Spirit.
- Carla : [37:12](#) Well, I, that's really helpful and I remembered being in your seminary class and I actually was just, I just, the other day I found something that you wrote and that was really helpful. It's called the mini sins of Corinth.
- Charmaine : [37:26](#) Is that our song?
- Carla : [37:29](#) It's your song Charmaine.
- Tony: [37:30](#) Charmaine I really initiated that and got that going and I added a few verses, but, but it's, yeah, it's ours, but it's mostly Charmaine's and that's pretty fun.

- Carla : [37:38](#) It's pretty good. I'm going to sing just a few of them. In the first tone did Carinthia apostle warns everything these schnoekered at communion, resurrection, doubting many tons of speaking, eating meat from idols, Temple maids a laying. Is that what you talking about?
- Charmaine : [37:57](#) That was a good one, wasn't it? (laughter).
- Carla : [37:57](#) I mean, and last one is, and a man sleeping with his step mom. It's a really solid song. So when you started talking about, of course my mind went directly back to that important.
- Charmaine : [38:12](#) And that you could find it that quickly is somewhat worrisome to me, Carla.
- Carla : [38:16](#) I just literally saw it the other day, so I just want to be completely clear about this. That me as a Bishop with all of my divine magical powers, I cannot steal someone's Spirit away from them or tell them that they do not have the spirit with them. Are you sure?
- Carla : [38:37](#) Well, you can say it, but it won't be true. Okay, well I wouldn't say it anyway. I just wanted to make sure that everyone listening understood that, that no one can say that they have lost it and then it's not there anymore because it is there. It is God's gift for everyone. Yeah. I think that's a really, really important point. It's certainly an appointing point, important point for people to here in Utah because I think that people hear that the opposite of that all too frequently and I really hate it.
- Charmaine : [39:09](#) It really, it strips away God's goodness. And that is the, the message that Christ that Jesus brought in, in every, in every encounter, in every healing. And every forgiving is God's goodness and God's desire for us to experience God's reign in our midst.
- Tony: [39:35](#) Absolutely. The, the, the change that God wants to make in our lives, God is also present to empower in our lives. That's the spirit present to empower change as we respond without the presence of the spirit. There is no, there is no changing or growing. It's the Spirit of the spirit helps us grow.
- Charmaine : [39:54](#) So, and if, and if people, if guilt is what is laid on people that often is what blinds them, their hearts in their minds to, to being able to recognize the spirit and even their, the spirit is, is trying to get underneath the, the guilt and the shame or what

other ever other things other people may put on, on to each other. To that liberation part. Yeah. Yeah.

Tony: [40:28](#) And that can be, that can be, yeah, personal and in S in one's private life, it's also social too. The civil rights movement was a work of the Holy Spirit in our world. The environmental movement today is a work of the Spirit in our world. I think we can clearly say that. So the spirit is trying to help us as individuals and as society and as a society grow into the love of God that's ever present instead of trying to, you know, pretend it's not there and go our own way. The love of God that is for all people and all of creation. Absolutely.

Carla : [41:08](#) So I know that I've been speaking about denominations here in Utah, but I think overall that a lot of denominations are pretty suspicious of the spirit because it's least able, I, I'm guessing because it feels least able to be controlled. And I remember working in my work in the church, I remember this woman who desperately, desperately wanted to speak in tongues. That was one of the only things she to do. And I just kept thinking why? And I, you know, like she, she prayed all the time to speak in tongues. That's all she wanted. And so like, I feel like we want the Spirit to do exactly what we want it to do and it, and does it rarely, rarely seems to work out that way.

Charmaine : [41:55](#) Yeah. I mean in, in some, in some denominations and in some parts of denominations, particularly those that are more charismatic or Pentecostal, the demonstration of spiritual, what's often called spiritual gifts, things like speaking in tongues or in prophecy. Sometimes like physical healing words of counsel those kinds of things are really sought after. And, and that is almost like the commodifying thing. You know, I've got more Spirit than, than you do. It can become competitive. And this is, I mean the Spirit has its nose, its nose, its own mind and its own way. And there are some denominations that really nurture a place for the spirit to be expressed. But there is also with that some inherent dangers and that is that if demonstrate demonstrable expressions of the Spirit is what gives you authority, then that becomes that thing you're talking about trying to control the Spirit so that I can be seen as special in some way.

Charmaine : [43:21](#) I have this special gift from the spirit, but Paul speaks to that too. And, and he again says, you know, the, you can have all of these gifts, but if you don't have love, they don't matter. They don't mean anything. And, and I don't know if that's exactly where you're going, but I think that's both the beauty of the Spirit in those denominations that are more charismatic or

Pentecostal. But it is also sometimes then the danger that there can be you know, some gifts are seen as superior or even essential to being seen as fully baptized into Christ. That you can't become a member until you've demonstrated some of these gifts of the Spirit. And I think that that then is saying, you know, we control the Spirit. We can make, we, it will help us create and sustain our structure within our denomination of who's really spiritual, who's really has authority and who doesn't. And that's one of the reasons other denominations are concerned about the spirit is because it can't be, it can't be pigeonholed. And so sometimes the talk about the Spirit or even the invitation for a broader expression of the spirit within the churches life gets, gets narrowed down.

Tony:

[44:59](#)

Yeah. Yeah. It's, that's an interesting experience you're sharing there, Carla. I, I think there's a tendency, I mean, all of us have to struggle with the issue of wanting self-affirmation of wanting something that will prove that somehow we're special. St Augusta refers to this as self-love, not, not self acceptance, which is a good thing, but, but self love is love that is focused inwardly on me in the ranks me the center. Yeah. Yeah. It's in the wrong direction. And so the gifts of the spirit can be used in ways that create division that creates separation, that exalt individuals' egos that you know, destroy community. So one yeah, one needs to be very thoughtful and careful and discerning about the Spirit's work in the church. It's, you know, just just because something, just because something is a form or structure doesn't mean it's wrong.

Tony:

[46:12](#)

And just because something is a free form expression doesn't mean that it's right. It's there. There's always, I mean, discernment is discernment of the spirit is an ongoing discipline of the Christian life. And so the, the woman you're mentioning who just desperately wanted to speak in tongues, gosh, I hope at some point somebody said to her, tell me about that. What, what is it you think you'll get from that? What, why do you want that so badly? Do you think perhaps that is that proof that God loves you? What, what, what do you need there? So there, there's, there's surely a need being expressed there that's not being met. And that's one of those cases where we're pastoral care and spiritual direction I think are very, it can be very helpful for guiding someone back, back to the center a little bit.

Carla :

[47:06](#)

I appreciate that. I, I was too young in my ministry to, to be, to ask that person those questions, but I S I've never forgotten it and it's been a good 15, 20 years ago that she did that. So I, I, that's really helpful actually.

Charmaine : [47:23](#) So I was, I'll go ahead. I was just gonna say so often in our lives, those become gifts that help us figure out what we might say the next time, because yeah, those are, those are those times when it's like, wow, there's something here, but I really don't know how to get at it yet. And that happens to me all the time.

Carla : [47:45](#) Well, that's good to know cause I just feel like you have all the answers.

Charmaine : [47:48](#) Well, you're wrong. Yeah, right.

Tony: [47:50](#) Yeah. And, and I can just say no, she doesn't know all the answers.

Carla : [47:57](#) Oh, burn!

Tony: [47:59](#) Oh, can I come back to that? The woman again? It's very, it's very interesting. There was a time in Community of Christ history when people did not feel like a reunion was quote, a spiritual reunion unless the evangelist who was at the reunion spoken prophecy at the end of the reunion, or if there was an apostle or a high priest or whomever as though, look, we've paid our money. We've stayed here the whole week. We've got to hear the Spirit speak at the end of the week. And the sad thing about that is that the Spirit was speaking all week in the, in the community. It's so waiting for the waiting for the, you know, the, the greatest show on earth at the end of the, where somebody says, thus saith the Spirit. And of course that I'm not discounting those experiences. They do happen. They are very real and transformative often, but, but it's an example of where somehow theS a legitimate gift of the spirit got turned into some kind of sign that we really were God's people or that this reunion really was spiritual, even though I didn't think it was the whole way through, you know, that kind of stuff. So it's, it's pretty important to be thoughtful, reflective, and discerning when it comes to our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Carla : [49:19](#) Yeah. I appreciate that. So I'm gonna of gonna bring this down to a close and I'm glad you brought up the Community of Christ part Tony, because I was wondering what does community of Christ say about the Holy spirit? I know you mentioned the Holy Spirit in our just our basic beliefs and I wondering what do we say about it?

Tony: [49:41](#) Yeah. Well, since you're mentioning basic beliefs I have in front of me I think this is a beautiful statement. The Holy Spirit. We believe in the Holy Spirit giver of life. Holy wisdom, true God.

The spirit moves through and sustains creation. Endows the church for mission frees the world from sin, injustice and death and transforms to cycles. Wherever we find love, show peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness or self control there, the Holy spirit is working. So that's our formal belief statement about the Holy spirit. I, I find it lovely. There's language from the ancient church there that the Spirit is the giver of life and Holy wisdom and Holy wisdom. There's the image of the spirit moving through creation. So there's an ecological side or cosmic side to the Spirits work that had endows the church for mission on.

Tony: [50:44](#) That's really important because it doesn't endow just to sit and sing him. So that's lovely. Endows us to be God's presence in the world. And the spirit frees from sin, injustice and death. So the structures of domination in the world is that the Spirit is trying to liberate us from those. So, and then that last part is something I started referencing earlier, that wherever we find love, joy, peace, et cetera, there is a Holy Spirit. So the church, the church is not the only theater in which the Holy spirit movie is playing. The Holy spirit is at work in the entire creation, always redeeming, always sustaining, always drawing people towards greater justice and love. So that's, I think that's, that's, that would be in a nutshell. The Community of Christ doctrine the Spirit.

Charmaine : [51:43](#) I think that's really born out in Community of Christ understanding of spiritual formation or spirituality, is that it is inviting, opening ourselves to being formed by this kind of a Spirit. The Spirit that assures us of God's love, but also instills and encourages us to love that plants in us a desire for peace and a desire to share peace, a willingness to let kindness have space in us and to extend kindness to enemy or friend. So these are all, these are all aspects of spiritual formation. And so those two go together. But the definition of the Holy Spirit, but also what we mean by spiritual formation are being formed spiritually.

Tony: [52:41](#) I think one other really good place to, to get a feel for what the Holy Spirit is for Community, Community of Christ, to go to our hymnal. There's so many beautiful Holy Spirit hymns in our hymnal and it's just a wonderful place to in poetic form. See what, what the spirit is to us in some ways our church qualifies as a Holy Spirit movement. We were begun by the work of the Spirit and we've been constantly renewed as a denomination and transformed. We are not the denomination we were 60 years ago because you know what, if you open yourself to the



Holy spirit, I guarantee there's going to be changes afoot. So that's just part of the part of the Spirit's work. So,

- Charmaine : [53:29](#) So an image that might be helpful for people as they open themselves to not only the idea of the Holy Spirit but to the presence of the Holy Spirit is one of being held being held in those moments when there is pain or they're suffering to be held in those times when peace. An easing of anxiety or uncertainty is what is needed, but also the idea of relationships being held by the Spirit. So where there is a broken relationship or where there is a relationship that's unfolding in new levels of love and joy that to imagine those people in that relationship being held, held maybe like in a hammock by the Spirit. Yeah. It brings things together and holds them and, and creates a space where Christ's presence, God's love the reign of God, the kingdom of God can, can be experienced. So that's my the image that I give to, to leave us with there. Yeah
- Tony: [54:56](#) Yeah. And the only one I have to leave us with is, is a, a benediction that it's at the end of Second Corinthians. co, it's heard commonly in, in different denominations at the end of the service where Paul says made the, the grace of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the koinonia, the community of the Holy Spirit be with us all. So Paul thinks in, in triadic ways. There, Christ, God, Spirit. And I love that last part. There may, may the koinonia, the commonality, the community, the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. That's what the spirit does, the spirit of communion and community.
- Carla : [55:45](#) Thank you so much. That's beautiful. I really appreciate this conversation. I think it's important for people to hear and to think about and, and I mean I don't know if we think about the Spirit quite as much as we should actually considering as William Temple said. It's, it's the one we have the most contact with. So that's been a really interesting conversation.
- Charmaine : [56:09](#) and thank you for being here with me and thank you for your questions and guiding us along.
- Tony: [56:14](#) Thanks Carla.
- Carla : [56:16](#) Oh well you're always welcome for that. Till next time friends.
- Speaker 1: [56:23](#) [inaudible]
- Speaker 2: [56:25](#) Thanks for listening to Project Zion podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher or whatever podcast

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Speaker 1: [57:22](#) [inaudible]

Speaker 6: [57:27](#) [inaudible].