Stassi Cramm: 01:07 Thanks Linda.

Linda Booth: 01:08 Those living in the United States have recently celebrated Thanksgiving, which is a feast with family and friends, a day of gratitude and our family. Traditionally, after we said the blessing, we'd go around the table and we talk about what we're grateful for and so I'm going to start by asking you what are you grateful for?

Stassi Cramm: 01:28 Yeah, we do that a lot of times too. Well, I'm actually grateful for a lot of things so I won't list everything. But this week in particular we just finished Giving Tuesday. And so I'm really grateful to how everyone responded from the church. Their willingness to share generously to help us make up some of the deficits that we have in the budget for a worldwide mission ties. To be honest, we were kind of worried as to whether or not people would respond for two reasons. Um, one, there are a lot of wonderful organizations out there to support and the number available and participating in giving Tuesday seems to be growing. So we knew we had a lot of competition and secondly, um, because worldwide mission ties have been so down this year, we didn't know how that might roll into giving Tuesday, but the day went great.

Stassi Cramm: 02:22 We had $150,000 in matching funds, so we were grateful for the families that put that together. And by mid-afternoon we had raised another hundred and 50, so we were at that 300,000 mark. So we reached out to some other families and were able to get an additional hundred thousand in matching dollars and
Then the church responded to those. And so, uh, by the time we were looking at all the data on Wednesday morning, we had about 90 or so thousand dollars in pledges that were still waiting to come in. But it looks like we're going to have about $575,000, including the matching funds for that day is amazing. Yeah, we're super excited and I'm super grateful for that. And I'm hopeful that that generosity will be contagious and that it will continue to flow in the coming days as people are Christmas shopping and thinking about taxes and, and what, you know, write-offs they might need.

Stassi Cramm: 03:20 And so I'm hopeful that, you know, we might have some other things to be grateful for, but I also would want to say that how grateful I am for my family. So we had the opportunity to spend Thanksgiving with my husband, Steve and with my parents. And, um, and we also got to spend time with my brother's family, our two children live far away. So this was our first Thanksgiving that Steve and I had without either one of our children. And so that was kind of bittersweet. Our daughter is, you know, is a surgical resident in Boston. And so she was on call work in the emergency room as the on-call surgeon and our son lives in Tokyo, so Tokyo doesn't practice Thanksgiving. So he, he was just working cause it was another work day, but we were able to give thanks that our kids are doing well and that they have jobs.

Stassi Cramm: 04:14 And so that was another thing that I'm super grateful for. And I, the last one I'll mention is my colleagues, you know, that we spend a lot of time doing church work. And so the people that we minister with and we serve with make a huge difference. And I'm really grateful to be able to serve with Scott and supporting Steve. And I'm also really grateful for the support I received from Steve Graffio and Jeff Naylor. So on Thanksgiving, I subscribe to a gratefulness.org blog and I get a word for the day, which is usually actually a quote or phrase. And so on Thanksgiving I got one by Rachel Naomi Raman, who I don't actually know who she is, but her statement was perhaps the secret of living well is not in having all the answers, but in pursuing an answerable questions in good company. That quote reminded me that I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve God and support Christ's mission through my role in the church.

Stassi Cramm: 05:20 I'm grateful for the people that I get to serve with and that makes a huge difference. So I have a lot to be grateful for.

Linda Booth: 05:28 Yes you do and the church does as well. So how do you integrate gratitude into your daily practice? You talk about the blog, so that's one of the ways you do.
Yeah, like you, I do a lot of things that are probably head oriented. The blog in some ways. I mean it speaks to your heart, but you know, it's that discipline of your head. So one thing in particular that I want to speak about is intentionality. So one of the ways that I have tried to be really focused on gratefulness in recent years and months is through intentionality. As you would guess, as you have experienced some days it would be really easy to forget that there are things to be grateful for. And so in this one time when I was in a particularly kind of dark, extended space, my husband, who I spend a lot of time away from, so he and I always try to connect every night, either through Alexa or the telephone.

He asked me, he goes, I want you to name one good thing that happened today. And he's like, just one. And it was really a super annoying question. And I was like, no, we're not gonna play this game. He's like, I'm not going to talk until you named one thing. And so I think I said something like, fine, I'm grateful that I'm still breathing. And he was like, okay, good enough. And you know, we just kinda went on and then the next night we get on the phone and he's like, name one good thing. And I was like, no. And he's like, yep, one good thing. And so I was like, Oh, Hey, I'm grateful that I'm talking to you. You know? And so this became this process where he would not continue in our conversation and now it's kind of become this pattern. We don't necessarily do it every conversation, but if anything starts to dip down a little bit, it's really, he's really quick to, you know, to bring that back to our forefront of our focus.

I would hate for him to know this. So I hope he maybe never listens to this pod or if you do dear, I love you very much, even though I very seldom in it that you're right. But I think he really was on to something. And, um, and that's where it dawned on me how important intentionality and a lot of aspects of life, but especially when it comes to recognizing God's blessings is so important because when we are in those dark spots, and I know that there's lots of people, I mean a lot of people that may listen to this who feel like life is just impossible and it's just too tough. You know? And so it's really easy to go to those dark places, but if you really force yourself, if you really choose to be intentional, even if it is just the fact that you are still breathing, you can find something to be grateful for.

Absolutely. As you're talking, Stassi reminded me of woman I had an account or with who told me a story of when she was a teenager, she would, her parents admitted to her psychiatric ward because of a deep depression she was in and she was mad at them and she was angry at God and she was just just filled
with darkness. And early in one morning as she was sleeping, these words came to her. She awoke and heard these words and it was praise me for all things. And when she woke up, she remembered the words and she thought, there's no way. I have nothing to praise God for. And she said, I began to try and she said, I began to praise God for the smallest of things like the light coming in through the window and the touch of the nurse's hand. And she said, I know the, the psychiatric care helped me, but I also know that praising God for those small things helped the darkness to go away.

Linda Booth: 09:04 And I have a practice that every night before I go to sleep, before I, as I beginning to pray, I always give thanks to God for things in the day. And you're right. Some days I have to really stretch to think of something that I'm particularly thankful for. But as a practice, it opens me up to the awareness of God all around me. And some days I'm filled with an understanding of gratitude because God is everywhere.

Stassi Cramm: 09:30 Yeah. Yeah. That's so good. Well, true confessions. You know that there are times in leadership where you're facing situations and circumstances that no one will ever fully understand. Even as you try to communicate, no one will fully understand, you know, what, what the situation, you know, look like in that moment. And in those moments, you know, sometimes it can feel really dark and you know, and yet in those moments, you know, you're also mindful how important it is that you rely on the power of the Holy spirit to guide you through those.

Stassi Cramm: 10:05 And so I have found myself, you know, sometimes when we are forced to make really difficult decisions that there have been times where I've been like, Oh, I just wish I didn't have this position. You know, I wish someone else was doing this and that just kinda drags me down. And so I've tried to be really intentional about flipping that the other way and even when the decisions that have to be made are very painful and very difficult and very hard to help others understand. I tried to give thanks for the opportunity that the church has given me by sustaining my appointment in the positions that I have. I try to, you know, give thanks for the opportunity to be the best possible steward of the churches mission and assets that, you know, I am capable of being. And I give thanks sometimes that other people aren't having to make the decisions that we're having to make. And so again, I don't say that to say that I'm, you know, more righteous than the other. But I'm just saying that I have really found that reframing things like you've described does make a difference in helping the light come into even the most darkest of moments.
Linda Booth: 11:25 Yes, absolutely. And so I guess, Stassi, I'm sure you're grateful for the opportunity to already be engaged in preparations for the next world conference on June 3rd through the 11th of 2022.

Stassi Cramm: 11:38 Yes! I can't wait! I'm so grateful!

Linda Booth: 11:44 Well, delegates to that 2019 world conference gave the church some assignments went on April 12th they adopted the World Conference Resolution 1319 on nonviolence and they gave you three big assignments. Huge. They're big. And so the first is over the next three years, Community of Christ members and leaders discussed the role nonviolence plays in the pursuit of quote, peace on and for the earth from Doctrine and Covenants 165:1d and in the life and mission of the church. And the second assignment is that scriptural theological and historical discussion resources on the principles of nonviolence be produced and suggested for members and friends of Community of Christ as part of our continued commitment to peace, education and advocacy.

Linda Booth: 12:37 And if that wasn't enough, the third assignment is that the position of Community of Christ on nine violence be referred to the first presidency for report and or statement to be presented to the 2022 World Conference. That's it. That's all we have to do. That's a big assignment for leaders and members to accomplish and in the next two and a half years. So because you coordinated the use of the common consent process at World Conference to discuss the nonviolence issue, I'm just assuming that you're also now tasked with managing the completion of the resources, reports and statements associated with world conference resolution 1319. Is my assumption correct?.

Stassi Cramm: 13:27 Well sort of. The first presidency definitely has this item on our strategic plan and um, and we understand that with everything else that we're doing over the next three years, this is important and is going to require some significant attention. And I have agreed or have been assigned to be the contact person so that, um, we try to divide things up in the presidencies. So one of us is the point of contact so that we make sure that nothing gets lost and that, that we keep things moving or that we at least understand why things are not moving. So to get this done, it doesn't take just the presidency, it's going to take lots of people, including the church to have those conversations. And so that's what we're doing. Well, let's first talk about then the first presidency report and, or statement and how's that going?
Stassi Cramm: 14:25 Yes. Well I have to confess that it always takes longer to get started on activities after World Conference than we would like. We always have come out of conference, you know, and we think, okay, this month we'll to get this done and you know, and it never happens like that.

Linda Booth: 14:42 Do you have the things pop up?

Stassi Cramm: 14:43 Oh, just maybe every now and again, little things, you know. Anyways. And we realized that this topic in was really big and significant and important. Um, and so we needed a plan and we wanted the plan to look at the question of what is nonviolence from a variety of perspectives cause we felt like our, our diversity as a church was really important. So we decided that the first step that we would take is to use all of the various world church teams that, that exist to help review this.

Stassi Cramm: 15:17 So as we are chartering the world church teams for 2019 through 2022 which we are almost done with the chartering process, we are including in their charter the task to consider this question from the perspective of their team. So as an example, the earth stewardship team will consider what nonviolence means as it relates to the earth. Um, you know, in contrast to that, the theological formation team will consider what the various theological perspectives are about nonviolence. And each of the other teams will do that as well. Then they will write, you know, position papers or reports or whatever is the best way to summarize their work and send that into the first presidency. And the first presidency will be working with the world church peace and justice team to review all of the inputs to look at where there are overlaps and similarities and to look at where there are unique perspectives and then to figure out how to um, summarize and produce articles or resources that would help the larger church engage in similar conversations.

Stassi Cramm: 16:32 We've also started to brainstorm what comes beyond that. And honestly we haven't been able to spend as much time or energy on that as what we would like. But we've had ideas such as maybe for instance, there are mission centers, cause we know there are some mission centers or areas of the church that have peace and justice gatherings or that have peace and justice teams. And so maybe some of those areas will want to, you know, submit papers or, or collect ideas, you know, that they can also feed back. So we're, we're looking at how now to also reach beyond just the world church teams.
Linda Booth: 17:12 That sounds like a great process. And you're right, there is so much diversity in the church over even what nonviolent, what, what any of this means.

Stassi Cramm: 17:20 Definitely.

Linda Booth: 17:21 So if you could, and I know this might be an impossible question, can you give us a snapshot of those different perspectives and how the first presidency will take them into account when writing a report and or statement for the 2022 conference?

Stassi Cramm: 17:38 Yeah, you're right, there is great diversity in the church and, and to be honest, there's actually great diversity within the first presidency. So I know that many people probably think that the members of the first presidency all think alike, but that is actually seldom the case. Now, by the time we come forward to the church with something, whether it's a paper or a position, we have found the ability to stand together.

Linda Booth: 18:06 And I'm just going to break in for a second. The council of 12 is the same way on the field. Say, well you all believe this way. It's like good heavens know the council of 12 from different cultures, different countries, different languages. We are not uniform.

Stassi Cramm: 18:20 And I know well and even different political viewpoints and I know politics is super divisive in some countries like the United States right now, but you know the presidency, the council of 12 the world church leadership council, we all have very different perspectives and so, so that helps because that says, you know, just in the beginning even having conversations within the quorum starts to bring a level of diversity in.

Stassi Cramm: 18:47 But we also know that that's not sufficient, that the council does not, you know, by any means represent the diversity in the church. So, and diversity is one of the things that's really important about the church. The fact that we are so diverse is part of our identity and it's also our strength because if the church can find common ground with all our diversity, then that gives us a wonderful starting place to help transform a very diverse world. Having said that, the challenge of making sure that all voices are heard is really tough. In some parts of the world, like the United States, it's easier to connect and solicit feedback. We can produce and distribute printed resources. We can post information on the website, we can point people to information through social media, we can facilitate virtual
discussions through social media. We can take surveys for feedback and the list goes on and on.

Stassi Cramm: 19:46 But even with all of those options, it's sometimes really tough to get people's attention and to get them willing to participate in the process. But if all of that wasn't hard enough, there are other parts of the world where really the only method that we have is to send people out there and to sit around trees, to sit on blankets, um, you know, to meet where the members of the church are and to just ask for their input. But that takes a lot of time and a lot of money. So we, you know, we'll do the very best that we can. But because of that, for the first presidency, that very diverse council of 12 is really important because not only do they bring their own personal diversity, but they are organized to represent the voices of the field. Now, you know, because you've been in that position that every field apostle can't possibly represent every voice or perspective.

Stassi Cramm: 20:53 But I do want people to know that they work really hard at it and um, and they own that as being a significant part of their call. And oftentimes in meetings, and I know you've been one of the people that's been just a little bit schizophrenia where you'll speak to a position representing one kind of voice from the field you used to represent. And then a little bit later in the conversation you may say, okay, but now from this other part of my field, and you might actually argue with the position that you stated earlier. So I think sometimes the council of 12 members feel like they have multiple personalities, but they do work really hard in trying to uphold what they are hearing and what they are receiving, you know, as inputs from their field. And I do think that that makes a huge difference. I know it's not perfect. I know that there are some times when maybe that one or two, you know, or three or whatever, you know, voices that were maybe important get missed. But that's where we also then I think have to rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us to be open to hearing that still small voice when we're missing it.

Linda Booth: 22:08 Yes. Yes. Uh, and also another question I have for you because the international headquarters staff is so small now. I mean, when I started working for the church, I mean I don't know how much smaller it is, but it's significantly smaller, very small. So how is the task of creating scriptural theological and historical discussion resources on the principles of nonviolence going to be written and produced for members and friends to continue their peace education and advocacy and in fact in three languages, I'm assuming?
Stassi Cramm: 22:43 Yes, exactly. So I, this question question is so straightforward and I wish I had a really easy answer. And in some ways this feels like one of those in answerable questions that the quote referred to I shared earlier. But, but we're going to do the very best and here's how we're going to do it. You know that I'm a planner, so one of the first things I did coming out of world conference was I attempted to lay out a timeline of what might be possible between now and the 22 world conference in light of our current staffing levels. In the end, we are already off of that plan because as you might imagine, there are other competing topics that require our attention and keep bubbling up. However, we are trying to make sure that as much as possible everything we do contributes to deepening our understanding of who God is calling us to be.

Stassi Cramm: 23:41 This means that as we continue to develop worship, reunion, material, disciple formation material, all the things that we actually produce all of the time, um, we will be weaving in common threads that move us into a deeper understanding of what it means to share the peace of Jesus Christ by faithfully embodying Jesus. The peaceful one. We're looking a lot to President Veazey's closing sermon from World Conference from the 2019 World Conference. We feel like that that provides us guidance not only for responding to the question of what is nonviolence, you know, from a Community of Christ perspective, but that it also guides us deeper in becoming who we are called to be as Community of Christ. He talked about how, um, some authors referred to Jesus as the forerunner of a new peaceful humanity. And I love that imagery. I wondered if the 70s in the room as our foreigners of Christ's peacece, you know, thought, Oh, you know, we're carrying on, you know, the Baton of that, of that mission.

Stassi Cramm: 24:57 Um, and he talked about how Jesus, you know, even as he faced some, some very difficult situations, persecution and violence, you know, through the cross how he managed to still speak an alternative message to power but in nonviolent ways. So Jesus by it was by no means passive is what Steve helps us understand. But he did embody peacefulness. And so Steve asked a couple of questions and so I'm going to pull those questions out of his sermon and I'm pulling a maybe slightly out of context. So I will challenge the listeners to go read that, uh, world conference sermon on the website. You can find, yes, you can definitely find it there. So one of the questions that he talks about is he's reminding us about our core sacraments of baptism, confirmation and communion. And he says, how might we think, speak and interact differently as disciples of the peaceful one?
If we saw ourselves through those sacraments becoming part of the embodiment of Christ piece, how does that change how we think, speak and interact differently? And so I think we all need to be struggling with just that question. So that's not a bunch of resources. That's one question. And it, it's out there in the church, through the sermon and we're going to be exploring that.

So the question was, how might we think, speak and interact differently as disciples of the peaceful one? And then he goes on to ask two other questions, which I would consider them ways to measure how we're doing with that first question. Um, so if we're, if our calling is to you know, is to embody the peaceful one, Jesus Christ, then he asks the questions, are we moving towards Jesus, the peaceful one or are we retreating from Jesus by reverting to our old humanity and its destructive ways of interacting with others and creation.

So those are big questions. But I think we're coming to the realization that what we need to do is not have this separate program that creates a lot of material that gets layered on top of the church with the church's call to live its mission. But as we live Christ's mission through our worship and disciple formation and our outreach to others that we need to bring into that these questions about what it means to embody the peaceful one. So people need to understand that it may not be a resource, but it's going to be woven through everything.

Excellent. Excellent. And I'm sure that the, we always produce really good resources and the release to church and, and I'm sure that a thoughtful inspired first president report and our statement will be posted on the web and sent out to pastors throughout the world and three languages. However, ultimately, and I believe, I know you agree with me, the issue of nonviolence must be lived out in individual and congregational life and advocacy. We must all be about justice and peacemaking. So how do you anticipate that the church will respond to nonviolence resources and referral?

Yeah, you're totally right. Just providing a statement. It, I mean it has value. A statement does help us, but it doesn't fully help us become all that we need to do. So creating a statement that the World Conference supports, um, is the goal of this resolution or it's the task of this resolution. But the important part of that is how do we go through a process so that any statement that is finally written down and agreed upon by
conference is already starting to be written on our hearts and altering our interactions with each other and our actions on earth. Um, but with regards to how people will respond as we work our way through this very potentially contentious, you know, um, discussion about nonviolence. First of all, I hope that people respond peacefully. You know, I hope that we are able to express the passions that we feel, but in a respectful way.

Stassi Cramm: 29:39

I hope that we are able model for the world how to have respectful dialogue, sharing very different viewpoints while accepting that we are all committed to the same mission. And so if I have a very different viewpoint from someone else, I need to not question their motive and say, well, you're obviously, you know, not a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. I just need to understand that how they are seeing that is different and try to understand what I'm missing. So there's not no way that every resource or every report will reflect the opinion of every person in the church. The need is for us to struggle together with the perplexing questions that discussions of nonviolence will uncover and continue to look for places where we can find common ground. I really hope that whatever we do produce that people are serious about engaging it and about having conversations about it and about sharing their alternative viewpoints.

Stassi Cramm: 30:42

Let me provide an example, and I do this with a little level of, you know, timidness because the example circles around a somewhat contentious issue that's actually making the news even now in the United States. Um, and that is you know, the question, um, about abortion and for those who have followed this question through the years, hopefully everybody can agree that good faithful Christians hold widely varying perspectives on what is the most nonviolent solution. And many years ago, so this actually wasn't recently, I read an article, but it has really stuck in my mind. It was written by a theologian about the debate on abortion. And what the article said is that clearly faithful Christians are not likely to come to a common agreement about this subject because for decades they have worked really hard and we still find people on all sides of the issue. So the theologian suggested that what we potentially needed to do is to go deeper into the conversation, to unpack the issue and to look for what are the causes that lead to the need for abortion.

Stassi Cramm: 32:04

And his argument was that perhaps if we dug deeper, we would find issues where we could find common ground. And so the examples that he gave was, you know, that at that time the reports were saying that things such as poverty and lack of
education often led to situations that resulted in, you know, an abortion decision. And so the theologians suggested that maybe the energy of all the conversation that was occurring could be shifted to work on some of the causes. So what's my point? My point is that I think we're going to have a lot of different responses as we try to come together on what is our sense of, of, you know, a statement on nonviolence and you know, there'll be people who want this statement to be very specific and very detailed on certain areas and there will be other people in the church who are just as faithful and as committed to our mission who will be strongly opposed to those statements.

Stassi Cramm: 33:06 So what I hope is that we don't stop there, that we continue to dig and say, what are the underlying causes that create violence and, and where can we find common ground? So the key is for us to stay engaged with each other and with the leading of the spirit and to look for those places. And that in and of itself unfortunately does not enfold on a timeline. So we're going to have to just struggle together. But the important part is that we stay engaged in the conversation.

Linda Booth: 33:41 Absolutely. So Stassi, in this great conversation, you probably have been thinking about what guidance you would give to those listening to this Coffee Buzz. And what is their role in embodying the peace of Christ in their individual worlds?

Stassi Cramm: 33:58 Yeah. So first I would like to lift up some things that I think are important for people to look at, both in general and for this particular topic. You'll remember that we have a model for discovering God's will and um, that was introduced like seven or more years ago. And so if people in congregations aren't familiar with this model, you can find it on the website and I would really encourage people to familiarize themselves with it. It's a great tool. It provides six lenses to consider discernment questions through and it kind of forces you out of your comfort zone cause each one of us has our own preferred lens. You know, I'm a thinker, so I really like reason, you know, Dale left man has been working on scripture commentary. So you know, he's a great theologian and often comes, you know, from the perspective of scripture and all of those are important. But this model reminds us to use all of them. So it's a great tool that groups, you know, should be using and making their big decisions.

Stassi Cramm: 35:01 And, and so that also then gives us a tool for people to reflect on as they're thinking about what would a statement on nonviolence look like for the church. Um, they should figure out
which lens is their favorite and maybe forced themselves to look at it from a different perspective. The second thing is people need to take advantage of the resources that the church will be producing. So our worship resource, our sermon helps our disciple formation material, our reunion material, because all of that, it may not be obvious, but all of that is going to helping us in this conversation. Um, you know it, again, it may not be specific, but it will be preparatory and it’s forming us as disciples who are able to embody the peaceful one. But ultimately each of our roles in embodying the peace of Christ starts with ourselves, who we are inside impacts how we act outside.

Stassi Cramm: 36:01 So consider this question, are you granting yourself grace and peace? Because Jesus told us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. He also reminded us we have to love our enemy and it’s really hard to love our neighbor or our enemy if we don’t love ourselves. And I think by extension we can say it’s really hard to extend peace or to work for peace with our neighbor or our enemies if we are not experiencing peace within ourselves. I think peace is a wave that flows out from each one. So when we are modeling Jesus, the peaceful one, our actions have transformative influence on others. Perhaps we all need to have a post it note on our mirror that simply says, how will I move toward Jesus? The peaceful one today.

Linda Booth: 36:53 Oh, wonderful. Everybody get out your post it notes.

Stassi Cramm: 36:56 Yes. How will I move toward Jesus, the peaceful one today?

Linda Booth: 37:00 Thanks Stassi, and thanks for all of you who have been listening to this episode of Coffee Buzz watch for next month’s Coffee Buzz episode with President Scott Murphy, the other counselor to Prophet President Steve Veazey. Thanks again, friend.

Stassi Cramm: 37:17 Thanks Linda. It was great.

Music: 37:26 [inaudible]

Josh Mangelson: 37:28 Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you are there, give us a five star rating Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.
Speaker 1: 38:24 [inaudible].