

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]

Brittany: [00:34](#) Hello everyone. This is another episode of Project Zion podcast. And this is Brittany Mangelson and I will be your host for today and today we're going to be bringing you a Chai Can't Even episode, which is when we talk to young adults in Community of Christ. So I'm here with one of my former seminary peers, Nate Mack, and I'm very excited about it. Uh, Nate currently lives in Independence, Missouri. I think you live in independence, Missouri.

Nate: [01:03](#) Correct!

New Speaker: [01:03](#) And uh, yeah, we are just going to talk about being a young adult in the church. So Nate, why don't you give us just an elevator pitch of who you are? Just a little introduction and we'll get started.

Nate: [01:13](#) Oh goodness. So I grew up in Southern Illinois, a little town called Flora. Uh, and one of the most significant parts of my formative years was that I grew up just 20 minutes from the campground for our mission center. And that was absolutely formative in so many ways for me because that showed me what community is supposed to be, that showed me how community can be. Um, and it gave me so many mentors and beautiful friendships that last, you know, to this day. And so when the name of the church changed to Community of Christ, you know, especially during seminary, as I'm reflecting on these things in the direction of the church, you know, I just realized that Community of Christ is the perfect name for the church because the name of our churches, our mission statement, and it just seems so fitting because all of the meaningful experiences that I have had with the church involve community. And so I can't think of a better way for us to say who we are.

Brittany: [02:26](#) Okay. Yeah. So I, I'm really excited to have this conversation with you because you did grow up as a lifelong member of community of Christ and you have gone through changes that the church has experienced over the last couple of decades. So, so yeah. Let's just dive into your childhood. Uh, I'm curious to know, did you attend camps? What was kind of the culture of

being a kid in Community of Christ when you were growing up? So were you mentored by other people? Were you taken seriously? Just what was, what did that look like as a kid?

Nate: [02:59](#) Right. So I feel very fortunate with the congregation that I grew up in. It's so I grew up in the town that my dad grew up in. And so I kind of inherited a generational relationship where people who already knew I loved my dad, you know, kind of automatically loved me and my sister as well. Um, and so, like I said, we were very fortunate in the fact that we had a number of meaningful adult relationships or relationships with adults who were more than happy to invest in us and mentor us, whether that be in the congregation or at camps. And so a term that you may have heard before from, you know, lifer, Community of Christ, people is like camp brat. Uh, so before I was old enough to be a camper, uh, my parents were often working camps and they would take me along.

Nate: [03:54](#) And so I, you know, got to see the behind the scenes action of camps, you know, before I was as a camper before I was ever a staff member. And so I think that has been really important for me as far as understanding what it takes for a camp to run smoothly. I've seen a lot of things of, you know, directors and other important staff members doing things that other people might not even realize happen, you know, whether that be cleaning windows, wiping down tables, taking out the trash and so from a very young age, I've just been instilled with this work ethic that if I see that something needs doing, I'm going to do it as soon as I can because then it no longer needs to be done. It's better for everybody else. And it just, you know, it just makes the whole situation better. And so as I mentioned before, you know, those camp relationships have been, you know, fastly formative for me because one of my camp directors, I've used him as a, a job reference probably every time I've applied for a job. Because I know that there's very few people who know me better than he does. And you know, that's the kind of relationship that, that comes out of the camping program.

Brittany: [05:19](#) So, yeah, it sounds like you were mentored as a kid and that you had a good work ethic instilled in you. And I think that that's, that's one of the, not to get cheesy or you know, cliché, but one of the blessings of community is that in community we can, uh, grow and have more people to mentor and nurture us. So I appreciate you lifting that up.

Nate: [05:43](#) Absolutely.

Brittany: [05:45](#) So, Nate, I'm wondering, you know, as, as you were like a teenager and growing up, how important was church life to you? Were you involved as a use, I'm assuming you continued to attend camps, but did you get involved with, I dunno, worship planning or anything like that on a congregational level?

Nate: [06:06](#) So I never became, you know, formerly a part of any service planning group or anything, but our mission center was usually pretty good about having youth activities where we would have like a lock in at a church. And we would put together a service at the congregation where we stayed, or it might just be, maybe it was, you know, youth Sunday and each congregation would, would make sure that their youth were included. And I really feel like my congregation didn't do that in a cheesy way, which was, which was really empowering and meaningful. And then, let's see, when I was in high school, I started attending a different congregation and it was smaller and it was, it was much more tight knit and community oriented. We, we used to joke all the time that, you know, if somebody was doing offertory for the service, they would typically just ask people to collect the offering while they were standing at the lectern.

Nate: [07:13](#) And so that was really funny and it was completely normal. And so, you know, sometimes it would be like, Oh, this person is doing offertory, so I'm just going to get up and grab the collection plates because I'm probably going to be asked. Um, and that was just part of our, our, our congregation culture, which was, which was really fun. Um, and so I guess I, I was more, I guess I was interested more, I guess you could say, or given more freedom to be involved. You know, I was asked to participate more because, uh, it was a smaller congregation. Uh, and so the years that that congregation were really meaningful for me and technically my membership is still there to this day. Uh, and you know, so those are, those are really my people in a lot of ways because they willingly invested in me. And they may and they continue to make sure that they know, I feel valued. Yeah.

Brittany: [08:25](#) Yeah. Thanks for sharing that. I'm just always curious because in smaller congregations, I know that sometimes people leadership can either maybe overuse some people or the expectation for youth and young adults is really high or they kind of get ignored and lost. So I think finding that balance with young people, it can be kind of tricky. But it sounds like you really value the value that was placed in you and the opportunities that were afforded to you. Is that,

Nate: [08:56](#) yeah, it wasn't, it was, it wasn't one of those things where I felt like they were asking too often. Uh, no, because I knew they valued me and because we had a good relationship, I knew that they were asking because they genuinely wanted me to participate or, you know, share my opinion on something.

Brittany: [09:15](#) So Nate, I'm curious to know about your involvement in church during college. I'm always curious know if people attended Graceland or if they, I don't know, got any messaging that they should only date or associate with members of Community of Christ or just how that all looked for you.

Nate: [09:34](#) Right. Uh, so I did attend Graceland. Uh, strangely enough, I have actually been a student on the Graceland campus three different times. I'm not sure how many people can say that and none of it was, uh, Oh shoot, what's the word? Not, I wasn't doing any work. Again, I got three different, you know, licenses or degrees. So if there's any grace lenders out there, if you ever need me to be a poster child for admissions, you know, just let me know. But yeah, so my original undergrad years were 2006 to 2010 and I feel like there was a really, uh, well, so when I came in, we also got new campus ministers and that was Dave and Dustee Heinze who were fantastic. They were exactly what the campus needed when they came. Uh, because, you know, Dave is such a musically talented person and dusty is such a pure and compassionate person that was, they just fit perfectly on a campus while they were there.

Nate: [10:42](#) And so that was, that was a really fun environment to be in. Uh, so, you know, my freshman year I was heavily involved attending campus ministries events. Uh, my sophomore year I was, um, chaplain for my hall and my junior year I was on the campus ministries team. I was, uh, the Sunday evening worship coordinator, which was, I look back on it and I just think, Oh my gosh, I would have done so many things differently. But you know, I also learned so much. And so, you know, in a nutshell that was, you know, my experience with campus ministries that, you know, I certainly got to be involved or more involved than I had been. And you know, I wouldn't trade that time for anything with the relationships that I made with, you know, my fellow chaplains with my hall mates, with my, my team members on the campus ministries team.

Nate: [11:44](#) You know, those, those years really impacted me. You know, so that's why I came in the fall of 2013 to finish my teaching endorsement and I actually got to be in the Sunday evening worship band. And that was really fun cause I, I had a reason to play music every week. And so, you know, all of those

experiences made it really easy for me to come back for the last two years to Graceland to be the campus ministries, graduate assistant. And you know, working with Mike Hoffman was a dream come true. He's a great guy, he's really easy to work with. And, you know, I got to give back to Graceland and the campus ministries organization, you know, two things that have been so meaningful for me in my growth into adulthood, I guess you could say.

- Brittany: [12:38](#) So since I did not go to Graceland as an undergrad and live on campus and that whole package,
- Nate: [12:45](#) Right, you would have been there together. You cheater.
- Brittany: [12:51](#) Yeah, I found Community of Christ too late. I'm really glad that I found it so young. And other times I'm like, Oh, but I missed out on so much like formative, just, I don't know, experiences, which is why I really liked this series cause I really love talking to people my age who grew up, but, uh, because I didn't have that experience. Um, I'm curious, and I mean, I guess I know a little bit about it, but can you explain campus ministries a little bit more? What were the things that you were doing? Who was involved? Just explain, explain it a little bit.
- Nate: [13:23](#) Right. Okay. So, um, it's been interesting being involved at Graceland three different times. I've been able to see a little bit of an evolution of the team. Um, and so when I was first there, there were, there were still, you know, two church appointed campus ministers, Dave and Dustee and, uh, Dustee oversaw the Community of Christ leadership program, which was another thing that, you know, the church and Grayson were pretty intentionally doing to help mentor future church leaders and give them opportunities to learn things that they might not already know. And so that was, you know, kind of dusty, his primary function, I guess you could say. But you know, she was also a wonderful mentor and you know, listening, compassionate ear. Um, and I guess Dave was more so the, the manager of the, the student team for campus ministries. And at that time we had a variety of positions from, you know, Sunday morning, Sunday evening worship coordinator. There was a, you know, and still is a chaplain president who serves both on campus ministries and the Graceland student government. We had a peace and justice coordinator at the time.
- Nate: [14:48](#) And that position really took the form of coordinating with the international club and different, different people to help bring events, uh, on campus that help us learn about other cultures or different religions and occasionally help us to dialogue about

important things that were happening in society. We also had a, a student priesthood coordinator and so, you know, whether it be serving communion for a church service or if somebody wanted administration, you know, this was a kind of a, a person of contact who would know, who on campus was a priesthood member so that people could get what they needed. And so I really liked the way that we had the team set up because occasionally, you know, a couple of times a semester we would say, okay, we need to have an event at this time. And because you know, we have an open weekend and you know, we would say there's, there's this important date or this important holiday or this important theme coming up, whether it be at school in irregular calendar or something like that. And so we would brainstorm together what that event needed to look like. And then it was, I feel like the planning was really organic that way because people were more invested in what was happening and then, you know, because people were able to give their direct input, they were, there were a lot more willing and more likely to actually work the event as well. Um, and so that was one thing that I really appreciated about Dave and Dustee's leadership was the way that they allowed us to grow our own ideas.

- Brittany: [16:40](#) So important when it comes to mentoring youth and young adults, the leaders of the church of tomorrow and up today. Really. So, yeah, I appreciate you articulating that and how they were able to involve so many people and not dismiss you because of your age or you know, quote unquote lack of experience.
- Nate: [17:00](#) Right. I hope anybody else who's might be listening who is serving with me doesn't get mad at me for getting their position cause I know I forgot at least three.
- Brittany: [17:17](#) So Nate, I'm curious to know how, uh, because it sounds like you were very intentionally, I keep using the word mentor, but it's, you were mentored into these different roles and you were really liberated in that. So I'm wondering if that involvement has, if you've seen that, that empowered you as you've gone through school, as you've started your career, as you've figured out, um, your place in life, I guess, how, how has that impacted you?
- Nate: [17:47](#) So ironically, or maybe not ironically it, it's sometimes I guess you could say sets me up for frustration because I feel like I know what human relations are supposed to look like. So if I have managers or supervisors who don't live up to the standard, I get really frustrated because I'm like, you know, that's not how

you show a person that you value them. That's not how you, you know, grow morale for your workforce. And I guess it's something that I sometimes take for granted that, you know, not everyone has had the same wonderful experience that I have being mentored and feeling valued the entire time.

Brittany: [18:33](#) Yeah, I can see how when you have been working with a community or an organizational, um, you know, subgroup or whatever you want to call it, if it's been good and healthy and functioning and then you come into you know, maybe more administration administrative situations where there's more red tape or people aren't treating each other fairly or whatever it may be. I can see how that would be really frustrating. So it's almost like your experiences with the church, I don't want to say like spoiled you, but that they were

Nate: [19:07](#) but they did, I'll say it, I'll say it,

Brittany: [19:10](#) that they were positive and yeah, positive enough that then, uh, yeah, realizing that not every group functions that way. I know that I've run into that a little bit as well with different teams that I've worked on. Um, not necessarily in the church, but yeah, it can be difficult to then not try to have everything you're involved with meet that standard. So I can totally relate. I guess my next question would be, in your opinion what are the benefits of religious communities in today's world? Cause I know that, you know, uh, our generation is stereotypically moving away from organized religion. So I'm just curious to know if, uh, what your thoughts are on what the benefits of religious communities are.

Nate: [20:03](#) You know, I feel like our whole conversation to this point really has kind of answered that question. You know, when it's, when it's going correctly I think a person is going to feel valued and mentored. And I don't, I don't wanna I don't want to say that anybody's doing it wrong because I would imagine everyone's doing what they feel is organic for them. Um, and I know that not everything is going to be meaningful for every person. And so I think, you know, I, I can certainly understand why someone would feel disenfranchised from organized religion, but I also hope that they at some point, either find the tenacity to find a community that meets their needs or I hope they accidentally stumble upon the community that meets their needs. Then, you know, are invited to an event which makes them realize that they want to be a part of something bigger than themselves because the relationships that I have because of this church are the reason that I am the person I am today. My relationships are the reason that I've been able to weather a lot of storms,

um, and come out the other side. Yeah. Without my relationships, I would be, I would be nowhere and I don't know who or what or where when I would be.

Brittany:

[21:39](#)

Yeah. I think that society will always need community. And we're in this weird transition stage where people have moved on line and maybe away from brick and mortar places like congregating, whether it's religious congregation or not, just um, you know, even like our shopping is all done online. So I think it's interesting when I think about relationships and I'm the first to advocate that you can have great relationships with relationships, with people in online settings, but I do wonder what will happen when, um, you know, more and more of those places are closing. And I mean, I know that there's even like libraries that are struggling to stay open and it's just that relationship factor I think is, um, so much more enhanced when you do gather face to face. So I'm glad you lifted that up. So I'm curious to know along with that I guess is what keeps you active or involved in Community of Christ? I know that you just graduated seminary just recently walked just a couple of days ago, but, but yeah. What, what keeps you involved I guess with Community of Christ?

Nate:

[22:58](#)

Um, you know, one, uh, one of my favorite parts of our church is that even, even though we're a worldwide church, we're still really small. Um, you know, and the fact that at our, our reception that we had before graduation on Saturday, Steve Veazey was there, Stassi Cramm was there, two apostles were there. You know, granted they're there. They aren't, they're just, you know, filling their executive role. They're there because they know people who are graduating. And you know, that's one thing that I love is that our leadership are so approachable and down to earth because, you know, many of us have known them before. They were, you know, in the leadership position they were in, you know, um, like art Smith for, he was at our reception and I've known art for 20 years now. I actually met him at a world religions camp in Toronto, um, which was another one of the single most impactful experiences of my life.

Nate:

[24:00](#)

And so it's, it's just really awesome the way our leadership organically grow into the positions where they are now. You know, because it makes it really easy. I think it sounds a little cliché or weird, but you know, it makes it easy for us to continue to invest in those relationships because we were, we know them and they're very personable people who want to be in contact with people so that they know the perspectives of, of everyday people in the church. And, you know, one thing that



really keeps me with Community of Christ is, you know, one knowing people who are at meaningful levels of leadership and knowing their passion, um, and knowing their hearts because their passion feeds my passion. And I often tell people that I'm, I'm very proud of our current leadership and I very much believe in the direction that they are, are helping us live.

Nate: [25:07](#) And you know, that's, that's one thing that certainly keeps me involved is seeing how much we have accomplished in our churches history. But, you know, then knowing that the work is never done, um, you know, there's, there's still people to be freed to be liberated, to be lifted up. Um, and, and you know, help these people know that they are of worth and they are valued. Um, and I really feel like that is the direction that we are continuing to move in. Um, and that's definitely something that I want to be a part of.

Brittany: [25:49](#) You are definitely not alone in those thoughts because I know that, uh, you know, just recently we had on Ryan Pitt and his wife Emma Gray Pitt and they,

Nate: [26:01](#) yeah.

Brittany: [26:02](#) What, what was that?

Nate: [26:03](#) Did you have them both together in the same day? Uh, two of my favorite humans right there.

Brittany: [26:11](#) It was pretty good. It was actually the first time I think I'd ever done one of these Chai Can't Even with two people. So that was, it was fun. Uh,

Nate: [26:19](#) yeah.

Brittany: [26:20](#) And my children did not interrupt. The listeners will have no idea how many times my children have run in, but about how Scott Murphy was in a band, I think they were at a camp together or something and they were in a worship band together and like, and then just a few years later, he's in the first presidency and just, just the, uh, like you said, the deep relational aspects that that has, that it's like, okay, we can have more, I don't know. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but like more patients when it comes to change in the church or we can have more, uh, just understanding of church leadership because we actually know them. You know, they're not these faceless, nameless, uh, you know, personality lists. People that are sitting on these Thrones somewhere. It's like you don't

know them. Yeah. Yeah. And I remember even, uh, my husband ran into President Veazey at conference and he was with my kids and he knew my kids and my camp were shocked by that. How does he know who we are? And it's like, well, maybe Facebook, but, but yeah, it's, it's just, it's like you said, it's a global church and you know, a worldwide church. And yet we still have this small, uh, sense to us that that makes it really easy to have really meaningful relationships all over the world. So,

Nate: [27:50](#)

Right.

Brittany: [27:52](#)

So we've talked a little bit about technology, but I feel like a lot of congregations are really interested in engaging with technology to try to connect with the younger generations. And I know that there's just various conversations at various levels about online ministries and just things like that. So I'm just wondering from your perspective, uh, how the church can continue to adapt to include technology or just the changing needs of young people.

Nate: [28:24](#)

Right. So, you know, I have a fairly unique perspective given that I'm also an educator and I'm starting to see some of the negative aspects of technological inclusion in the classroom. I'm seeing the times where it can be a distraction or just not used in a meaningful way. And so I think technology is great when it's great, but if it's just being done differently just to say that you're using technology, then that's not the reason you use technology. It needs to be an authentic, organic meaningful use. Otherwise, there's no point, um, because you know, if the technology allows you to do something that you weren't able to do before, awesome. Um, if you're just stressing people out by adding a cumbersome, uh, technological element, no, absolutely not. Um, because, you know, there, there are certain people, um, among older generations, I guess you could say, who are really intentionally to connect with younger people. And that's, that's wonderful. And you know, like we've been talking about when you're able to tie back and re rely on previous relationships that have been meaningful, you know, then you can see that somebody's doing something because they, they're trying to be intentional. They're trying to make things better.

Nate: [30:06](#)

But, you know, don't put something on yourself, you know, one, especially if you don't know how to do it. Um, and you know, I, I feel like I'm going down a rabbit hole that I wasn't expecting, but I think it's a, it's certainly important to talk to your community and make sure that what you're trying to do is going to fulfill the need. Because, you know, like we've mentioned,

sometimes you're able to connect with people like you and I were, how many States away and having this conversation. Uh, so like I said, technology can be wonderful. Um, but it has to, it has to be meaningful still.

Brittany:

[30:47](#)

Yeah. I really appreciate you saying that because I think that sometimes people think that if they just put a big screen TV in their sanctuary or if they, you know, I dunno, start streaming their services or their pod or you know, make podcasts out of their sermons or something that, that their congregation will grow. And I'm not saying that these things don't help or that they're bad or anything, but when you go into a new technical, technological space with this idea that it's going to fix, all your problems that it's not necessarily the right direction. And I think that sometimes, um, energy can be misplaced when people from my perspective almost just want a more simple worship experience or a simple gathering or they don't want to, um, you know, they've been plugged in all week, so maybe they want just a more simple experience. So, yeah, I totally agree with, with what you just said. So, Nate, uh, this is a big question, but I'm curious to know what you see as the biggest challenges moving forward into the future are for us as a church.

Nate:

[32:11](#)

Yeah. I'm, I'm really glad you sent me the, the conversation notes beforehand for that question specifically. I mean, granted, I probably still would've had the same answer, but I was, I was glad to at least know that one was coming. Um, and over the last couple of years, you know, especially spending the last two years in seminary, I've, I've had a lot of time and opportunity to, to think about this. And for the last couple of years, the resounding theme for me is relevance. Um, because from my perspective, I don't think anybody is going to stop attending church if it's relevant. Um, and you know, I realized that that can just at face value can sound very much, uh, controversial and, and directly in somebody's face. And I, I don't want to mean that at all. Um, but you know, sometimes in the diversity of beliefs that exist because a person, an individual person's theology is as diverse as the number of people there are. And so that means that the meaningful ways for you to connect with the divine are going to be as unique as yourself. And, um,

Nate:

[33:45](#)

I think it's really important for that reason to include as many people as you can in your worship planning. Um, and you know, maybe you need to have one Sunday a month, it's focused on a certain theme or focused on a certain worship structure. Or maybe you feel maybe you realize that Sunday mornings just don't work for most of your congregation and maybe Thursday night to do for some random reason because everybody's free

on Thursday night and maybe you start, you know, Thursday night coffee shop church with that's just really simple. You have people playing music and singing, um, and time for war for meaningful conversation on the week's theme. Um, you know, like I said this, this is when we, we have to trust our groups and ask them what they need and then together we figure out how we meet those needs. And you know, fortunately for me, um, relevance hasn't ever really been an issue because of relationships and you know, every one of my relationships, it helps me figure out who I am and be more authentically myself. And you know, church has provided me with some of the most important relationships in my life and so like I said, relevance, I don't see being an issue for me for a while because I'm always going to have those relationships.

Brittany:

[35:25](#)

I resonate with that a lot because I think that the, the core gospel message definitely is still relevant and yet we as Christians, and I'm not even calling out community of Christ in this, just Christians in general, in various congregational settings, we can overcomplicate things. And so, you know, I think that it's good that you said maybe we need to think outside the box as far as Sunday morning worship goes. Or maybe we need to switch up the format of what a worship service looks like. And I know that my congregation has tried to do that and it's been surprising to people because they're used to just the standard Sunday morning worship format, but it's actually been well received. And I think that it intrigues people enough to keep coming back. And we have someone in our congregation who I know is a Project Zion listener. So maybe he'll to hear this and know that I'm talking about him.

Brittany:

[36:25](#)

But he said, you know, for the first six or eight weeks or even beyond that, that he came to our congregation literally every single week was something dramatically different. And he's like, I just can't figure you guys out because every time I come it's something so different. And I, you know, I don't mean to toot my congregation's horn too much, but, um, we do switch things up a little bit because our congregation is very diverse in salt Lake. And so it, it helps and it keeps people engaged and coming back. And I guess maybe always guessing. So, which can be a good thing, but also be a confusing thing. There's a lot of moving parts.

Brittany:

[37:06](#)

Oh, it's good. Yeah. I'm constantly asking myself though, like, okay, what week is this? What type of worship are we doing? And we don't get that into, so if we ever ever reached that level, somebody should shut us down. Oh no. It's all good though. So I guess going along with this, and I can assume I know what your

answer is, but I still want to hear it anyways. How can we as a church continue to, uh, empower the youth today is they are stepping into leadership roles as they're discovering their own theology. How can we help them, um, still find value in community of Christ?

Nate: [37:54](#) Right? Uh, so leaning on my educational background, I think that one of the best ways to implement that is scaffolding. And so scaffolding means that you give as much support as is needed until someone feels confident and they're doing it on their own. So whether I'm teaching somebody how to do sentence diagrams or a new kind of math that they're learning, you know, or think through different science problems, you know, any teacher's goal is going to be, okay, I'm going to start at a high level of support and then gradually back off. And my hope is that your confidence is going to build as you get more practice with whatever it is. So then I can set you free and you feel confident that you've learned something new. Um, and I think that's exactly what needs to be done. Um, because that I feel like has been the meaningful part or the functional part I guess you could say of the mentor relationships that I have benefited from.

Nate: [39:05](#) You know, you're, you're naturally going to see the different activities that somebody is interested in and then you can say, okay, which part of that do you want to help with next time? And then they're like, Oh crap, my opinion is important, my effort is valued. Um, and I think that's a really genuine and organic way, uh, for that relationship to, to progress.

Brittany: [39:33](#) I love that because not only does it empower the youth, but I feel like it, it helps liberate tired ministers as well and that we don't have to have this mapped out plan of this is how we save the church or save our congregation or get kids back in the pews or whatever. I mean it, what you're describing, I feel like would, if we could truly live it out with liberate everyone.

Nate: [40:00](#) Right. Cause, like you said, you're going to help prevent burnout because you're, you're setting up situations where people are trusting other people to share their opinions and their ideas. Uh, you know, so you're keeping your idea basket fresher. Um, so yeah.

Brittany: [40:20](#) Yeah. And we, uh, um, Project Zion have a series called What's Brewing, which is all about mission. And we often talk about how contextual mission is. So what works one area won't necessarily work in another area and you really have to get to know the people who you're working with and who you're

bringing ministry with ministry to or whatever. Yeah, the people with around is exactly. Uh, yeah. So to me like this is all connecting. Um, and, and really again to use some church speak in Community of Christ. It's letting the spirit breathe and just relaxing and knowing that we don't have to have all the answers and that the things will, will work themselves out. So that is the hope. That is the hope. Which brings us to my next perfect cause. I'm wondering what gives you hope as we move forward together as a church?

Nate: [41:25](#) Right, no, everything for me comes back down to relationships. Um, whether it be the depth of relationships that I have because of the seminary program and, you know, the multitude of directions that my, my classmates have come from. You know, I see the passions and I know, you know, for a fact that, you know, we have passionate people, you know, two of my best friends, you know, live in California and DC area right now. And it's like, you know, so I know that I have at least the width of our nation, you know, then we have people in French Polynesia and India and Germany and you know, British Isles and I know the passion of those people and that gives me life. That is the lifeblood of our church. You know, literally, figuratively, any way you want to look at it. Um, our diversity is our strength because, you know, whether it be, you know, Joshua from India, you know, in our cohort, you know, all of the wonderful things that he was able to share with us in classes.

Nate: [42:38](#) Because of the difference of his life experience, he helped us understand things that we wouldn't have understood without him. And um, so yeah, the what gives me hope is knowing the passion of our people, um, and trusting that they're going to do as much as they can where they are. Um, and you know, knowing, knowing the people I know, I know they're not going to quit. Um, and I don't know what else to say for that. It's just I know so many wonderful people who are giving everything they have and doing what they can to empower those around them, um, to create and build and sustain a meaningful church.

Brittany: [43:31](#) Yeah. I remember at one point in seminary, I think it was maybe Matt Frizzle's class and we were discussing, I don't know if it was James cone or it was something like that. And Joshua took a lot of time and talked about how liberation theology is seen in India. And just, I just remember thinking like, Holy moly, here I am. Like, I think that I've been oppressed by religions. Not that it needs to be the oppression Olympics, but just hearing another perspective outside of my very white Western nation privileged position was just so eye opening for me. And then thinking about in that same room how we had, you know, three, four or

five other countries represented. And yet we were all focused on this central question of who is Jesus and what does the gospel mean from these different social locations? And, and then just to realize that all of these people are part of my community.

Brittany: [44:39](#) And like you said, giving everything they have to make their corner of the world a better place. And yeah, it was, it was one of those moments for me that I was, I just really realized how I could never manufacture an experience like this again. I mean, it was like, this is, this is wild that we are all just, you know, in this room together, having this conversation, bringing in such different perspectives from all over the world. And yeah, I just don't know where else I could find a community like that, which, which is exciting and challenging for sure. So Nate, uh, at the end of my podcasts I always like to just ask if there's anything that I didn't ask that you would like to share with us or is there anything that you'd like to leave us with?

Nate: [45:27](#) So I am currently at an awkward and tumultuous crossroads in my life, both professionally and, and personally and I know that there are times in our lives when making decisions for ourselves, um, isn't always the easiest or cleanest option. And I know that because that's where I am right now. Um, and I hope for anybody who's listening who finds themselves in a similar situation, um, I pray that you are blessed with both the personal strength to make a selfish decision whether it's benefiting your, your, your own wellbeing, whether that'd be spiritual, mental, physical, um, you know, or whether it be, uh, a better financial situation. I pray that you are blessed with the support that I have from family and friends and professional networking relationships, um, that even when your situation feels the lowest, um, you're still able to find a situation that is going to be meaningful and supportive. And positive for you.

Brittany: [47:06](#) Nate, thank you so much. I, uh, I know that this interview did come at a difficult time.

Nate: [47:16](#) Yeah.

Brittany: [47:18](#) I'm grateful that you even still said yes and I've really appreciated your honesty and candor and just your experience. And I, like I said, I really appreciate hearing the stories of lifelong Community of Christ young adults because I think that there is a perspective of hope and a challenge and just a reminder that what we have is relevant and will continue and that energy makes me excited and so, and, and I just love how raw and real our generation tends to be and uh, I think that it's

a collective message and voice that the church needs to hear. So thank you so much. Absolutely.

Music: [48:12](#) [inaudible]

Josh Mangelson : [48:14](#) 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 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.

Music: [49:10](#) [inaudible].