

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.

Linda Booth ([00:34](#)):

Welcome to the sixth episode of Coffee Buzz my name is Linda Booth and I'm a full time disciple of Jesus Christ. For the last 22 years I served as Community of Christ apostle and director of communication. And for the first seven of those years on the council 12 apostles, I served with guest prophet president Veazey. So welcome friend to our Coffee Buzz podcast conversation.

President Veazey ([01:05](#)):

Thank you. Wonderful to be here.

Linda Booth ([01:07](#)):

It's good to have you. I was thinking this morning as I was driving in about those early years when I first came onto the council and how overwhelmed I was as one of the first two women apostles ordained to serve in that way. And you were so welcoming and kind, I remember and encouraging and I want to thank you for that. You were also a, at that time, if I remember correctly, you were the secretary of the council of 12.

President Veazey ([01:35](#)):

Yes, that would be correct.

Linda Booth ([01:37](#)):

And then the council of 12 elected you to serve as president and you were very instrumental and you probably don't know this, that you were instrumental in my leadership development at that time. And so as you were for so many other people, I want to thank you for that as well. Steve, you've recently concluded of the January session of the world church leadership council, which for, I don't know if all of our listeners understand who has made up in that council, but it's the leading quorums of the church, the council of 12 presiding bishopric, et cetera. And so leaders, it's a very diverse group of people. And so leaders from all over the world gather people from Honduras and French Polynesia, Wales and Africa. And at this session is my understanding. You met to engage in a spiritual practice to open you to God's intended future for the church. Could you share part of that experience with our listeners?

President Veazey ([02:37](#)):

Sure. We're not necessarily new to the concept and practices related to spiritual discernment because the church as a whole has been engaged in that as we have tried to respond to the call to be a prophetic people who are discerning God's will together. And so this is a continuation of this emphasis, but actually going deeper for world church leaders because we believe as the church journeys into the future, discernment is not just about a particular issue for a period of time. While it may involve that really the stance of leadership, that the culture of leadership in the church needs to be one of continuous discernment because things are changing rapidly in the world. Things are changing rapidly

and the whole arena of religion and spirituality, Christianity and at church that is engaged in the world as a positive witness has to be constantly discerning what's going on, where's God at work, where are we going to align our resources and so forth. And so the discernment process that began in January focused on the nature of discernment, uh, what are the spiritual practices that one should incorporate on a daily basis to always be open to listening to the voice of God through the Holy spirit, listening to others.

President Veazey ([04:35](#)):

So it's a, it's a, it's a way of being, uh, as a disciple and church leaders. And then we spent a lot of time beginning to discern what's the heart of the matter. And that means often we come with questions, but those questions may not be the most essential questions and kind of like peeling back the layers on fruit or, uh, you keep peeling back until you get a sense of, now we've gotten to an essential question or several essential questions that really should be the focus of our discernment. So in the world church leadership council this January, we engaged in asking ourselves, what is the essential question that we need to discern regarding, as we attempt to provide leadership in the church? And we expect that process to continue over the next, over this year in 2020. Uh, and it will guide then how we respond to other particular issues, uh, according to our responsibilities. But between our meetings, we are tasked with continuing the spiritual practices remaining open, staying in touch, we'll have some check in points. And then next may we come together again as a world church leadership council to continue the process.

Linda Booth ([06:15](#)):

Yes. That's wonderful. It's very reassuring to know that our leaders are engaged in deepening their own spiritual journey so that they can lead the church.

President Veazey ([06:26](#)):

So it's not business as usual or just ticking off tasks. We're, we're really trying to, uh, root and ground ourselves in a culture of continuous discernment and, and we believe the whole church needs to be in that position in order to offer relevant witness and ministry during this day and age.

Linda Booth ([06:52](#)):

And you're right, the leaders, as long as I've been in Lee was in leadership that w that was always a major part of all of our meetings was the worship and the spiritual journey that we were on. But it is true that we can always, all of us as disciples go more deeply into that relationship with,

President Veazey ([07:12](#)):

I really learned a lot just through this recent session as we engaged some of the ancient spiritual formation practices of Christianity. Uh, and, and we reached into the depths of the Christian story, uh, to find that way of moving from our heads to our hearts, to our souls, where hopefully there is a, a depth and fountain of, of wisdom as we connect in that way to both our story and then current day revelation of God in our midst.

Linda Booth ([07:59](#)):

What was one of those old early Christian practices that particularly impacted you?

President Veazey ([08:06](#)):

Yeah, uh, surprisingly for me, it had to do with doing less thinking and worrying and becoming quiet in order to do what's called Holy listening.

Linda Booth ([08:27](#)):

Yes.

New Speaker ([08:28](#)):

And at first it's very frustrating because you can't get your mind to turn off, but there are techniques that you use to continue to return yourself to centering your soul in God. And you learn not to be frustrated when your mind takes off in another direction, but you view that positively as just another opportunity to return to God. And that gives you a different perspective on the whole experience. So since then, I've been really practicing, uh, being centered in God's being, which goes beyond knowing all about God. It's, it's more of a matter of faith and experience and, and learning to just, uh, be in God's love, uh, as a being, uh, as a created being and then finding connection with God and others through that.

Linda Booth ([09:38](#)):

It places you in a very vulnerable position.

President Veazey ([09:42](#)):

It, it does. Um, because that experience will change you.

Linda Booth ([09:49](#)):

Yes.

President Veazey ([09:50](#)):

When you have a deeper sense of oneness with God and others and the creation and that you're part of that whole, it changes you in the way you relate to others, the way you relate to the environment in the way you understand and relate to God. Yes.

Linda Booth ([10:09](#)):

Yes. Well, I'm excited for your may meetings and I would encourage all of our listers, uh, to pay attention to God in their lives and to make time for those sacred Holy listening times of silence. Um, you and others, there's been online, uh, a question, a guiding question that's preparing people for the next world conference. And so that question is, are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful one? And you first presented that question in your closing 2019 world conference sermon. When people are getting ready to leave. It was a challenge for them as they began to leave. And so why is this question being lifted up now on the internet for the church?

President Veazey ([11:05](#)):

Well, um, all the way back to the world conference closing sermon the context of that was the story of the Samaritan woman at the, well, her encounter with Jesus and then her, uh, way of responding to that, going back to her home village, sharing her experience. And then it talks about people who left and began to go to find Jesus also. And, and so I was using that as kind of a rhetorical way of saying, where are we in terms of responding to Jesus Christ after having established or hopefully establishing the

Christ we're following is the peaceful one is our forerunner of what human beings can become in creation as peaceful beings. I did not anticipate that that question would become highlighted or emphasized in the current way it is being emphasized. But evidently it resonated with people as a possibility for helping us think individually, but also corporately in our congregations, in our groups, in our various expressions of the church.

President Veazey ([12:43](#)):

Uh, are we, um, becoming more like Jesus, the peaceful one? So it becomes a question of personal reflection that can guide one's, uh, discipleship formation, ongoing discipleship formation, but also a way to shape congregational focus and experience. And it provides a reference point for other communications of the church resource development. Now also in my mind at the time was the, uh, resolution that world conference passed on nonviolence, which is quite in depth and scope active. And it called for a serious discussion in the church. About, um, the role of nonviolence individually and as a people in our understanding of discipleship and the mission of the church. And so if Jesus was the reconciling peaceful one and we look at what Jesus taught and, and did, then what is our relationship to that in terms of our incarnation or embodiment of the peace of Jesus Christ. So it was really not new.

President Veazey ([14:14](#)):

And yet it's another way of understanding it and then making it more personal and effective in our formation as disciples, as congregations. Now, in my own experience, I never try to ask the church to do something that I'm not doing is just a standard for me. So I've been using the question in my own life cause I think a lot of times we think about changing others or changing our congregation or changing the whole church or changing the world. But we never think about changing ourselves and our own transformation. So I initially have used it as am I moving toward Jesus, the peaceful one in my own discipleship and sub questions like, am I spending enough time centering myself in the spirit of the peace of Jesus Christ? So that, that's part of my being. Am I doing that sufficiently on daily basis? Am I spending sufficient time with the passages of scripture that point clearly to Jesus's message regarding reconciliation, justice, and peacemaking?

President Veazey ([15:44](#)):

Am I being shaped by that sacred story? Am I discerning where Jesus, the peaceful one, is it work in the church, in my family, in the community? And how am I supporting that? So I'm using it in a very personal way. It's interesting and this will probably be frustrating to those who are playing in the life of the church. But as I have spent time with the question, I realize that there's another question that's going to follow. And that is not just am I moving toward Jesus, the peaceful one, but am I moving with Jesus the peaceful one? And that gets me right on the, in the middle of the action, uh, own the frontiers of mission. So it's not just a goal, uh, how close am I coming? But now am I in sync? Am I congruent? And I think that moves us to dynamic, uh, prophetic ministry sometimes on the edges in society. So it's, it was kind of an interesting, challenging, a little bit scary place at the question took me, uh, but ultimately the question is, are we as community of Christ moving not just toward Jesus as if we're trying to catch up, but we've done to catch up work in terms of our understanding of the peaceful one. And now are we moving with Jesus? Which is the embodiment question. That's a lot. That's a long answer to your question.

Linda Booth ([17:38](#)):

No, no, no. I, that's, I really like that question better because, because we always, we always move into where we're trying to get, we're trying to be more in alignment, but the idea of being with Jesus, meaning serving with Jesus as Jesus for Jesus, I mean that really makes it more tangible. It also makes it more not only life changing, but changing and our relationships with others and with our strangers and helps us align with what Christ's mission was when he walked on the earth.

President Veazey ([18:15](#)):

And in the process I think we will reclaim who Jesus really was and is in the midst of all the varied interpretations and all the things being done in the name of Jesus, all the human agendas being attached to the name of Christ that are so misleading and have really hijacked what the gospel was all about, to serve humanity. And I think it will help us sort those out. And then we have our focus on Christ, the peaceful one.

Linda Booth ([18:51](#)):

Yes. Well, I'm thankful for that second question in that closing sermon when you presented that question, but you had other questions too. A lot of good, powerful questions. Uh, you, and I'm going to quote the context of when that question was presented and I'm going to quote the scripture testifies that all creation waits and this quote, the next three words, quote Romans the eighth chapter, the 19th verse with eager longing in quote for peaceful humanity to appear on the world stage to turn the tide of hate, agony and destruction. With that in mind, the central questions raised by our text, meaning that the Samaritan woman texts looms even larger. Are we moving toward 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 I want you want you to kind of unpack that because that is really a powerful understanding of what is actually happening in our culture and even in Christianity itself.

President Veazey ([20:04](#)):

Yes. Um, and yeah, I think you've identified the core of what I was trying to, uh, set up as a, as a tension. Uh, there's a theological tension there in terms of our own identity and discipleship and Jesus Christ, which the scriptures say when we're baptized, we should become a new creation or we will become new, we are a new creation. And we are part of a new community that is Christ inspired and Christ is at the center of it. The dividing walls go down between people, uh, all the ways we identify people and try to separate from each other. Those are now gone. Uh, it's a new creation and yet it appears that humanity struggle is even though we have been baptized we have covenanted with Christ in the context of the church, which is to be the new community.

President Veazey ([21:22](#)):

We have difficulty living entirely in that new creation and we revert to what scripture calls the, the old humanity or the old self, which is more driven by self centeredness, greed conflict. That results the end in violence. That's the manifestation of the old creation. So there is this great struggle going on in throughout creation what's going to prevail. And we see signs of both happening. The new creation can become visible in us, in the church, in the community. The old creation is certainly visible in all of the conflict, violence, manipulation we see going on in the world, greediness going on in the world. So it, yeah, it sets up an understanding of what's hanging in the balance, but also hopefully with the encouragement of the gospel that through God's revelation in Christ, the new creation is already present and it grows through us and our relationships, our compassion, our generosity, our peace making in the world. But it's very hard to find wholeness when you're trying to live in both creation.

Linda Booth ([23:10](#)):

Yes, it is. It is sometimes nearly impossible. I like that quote from Romans, with eager longing the juxtaposition of the word eager with longing and, and I do sense that eager longing in cultures where violence and agony and destruction seems to be, I hate to use the word winning out, but it seems to be emphasized or we see it so much that eager longing in the lives of people for something different.

President Veazey ([23:42](#)):

And, and in the Romans context, chapter eight, it describes the whole creation. And so I interpret that is it's certainly focused on human creation, but actually the vision of scripture is the whole creation, all creatures of creation all living systems, the environment, the ecologies are in a way a longing with eagerness, for peaceful humanity to arrive because it's humanity that primarily causing all the problems that then result in the suffering of the whole creation. So it's a way of understanding the big picture of what's going on in our lives.

Linda Booth ([24:49](#)):

Well, and I, I know I just have this sense, this eager long, this ear longing and sense that God has been leading us as a church, even in our name change, uh, Community of Christ, that we are a community, not just a community within our congregations, but the community of our neighborhoods, the community of the world. And that we're centered in Jesus Christ, which is the width Jesus. So it all goes together. Interestingly enough, if we just pay attention to where God is leading us.

President Veazey ([25:22](#)):

Yes, I agree fully with that.

Linda Booth ([25:26](#)):

I know you do.

President Veazey ([25:27](#)):

And it is interesting in some versions of Romans eight, it, it, it also says the whole creation is standing on tip toes with eager longing for these blessings to come. That puts a lot of responsibility on us as human beings to get our act together, change our ways, and have the kind of impact that becomes a blessing for the whole that God is God is also eagerly longing for us to do that.

Linda Booth ([26:03](#)):

Yes, yes. I'm sure God is when God weeps, God weeps. Yeah. So the, the challenge of that closing sermon, and I, I'm getting excited even remembering the sermon and in that guiding question, all the questions that you ask in that sermon, because there were several questions that were very profound. If we really, uh, look at them and really think about them and really think of the difference it might make in our lives, in our congregational lives. So the challenge in that sermon is to transform our lives and communities so that we can share Christ peace with all people. Uh, and quote from your sermon. As for this faith community, I continue to feel the Holy spirit urging us to go much deeper and further and exploring, embodying and sharing the peace of Jesus Christ in all the locations and vocations of our lives. As we do, we will discover the essential meaning of restoration. So restoration is a word that I've heard since I was a little girl. And it's, our understanding of restoration has evolved, thankfully. Yes. And so

how has peace related to the mean of revelation? And maybe even as a followup question, how can living Christ piece impact our understanding of restoration?

President Veazey ([27:31](#)):

So I think back to this big drama, this cosmic drama that's described in scripture and in is continuing to unfold in terms of our part of the story. Um, there is a biblical narrative that says in the beginning, creation was good and there was harmony in creation. And then the narrative kind of the drama, uh, continues to unfold. And human beings begin to discover, uh, through self-consciousness, their own, their ability to assert their independence, their freedom. Uh, and that results in a whole lot of problems. Uh, different traditions. Describe it different ways we describe it as what humans do and choose to do has implications that go far beyond the moment or a particular person. Uh, so violence entered, um, and, um, through the story of Cain and Abel, you know, there was killing, um, blaming versus instead of taking self responsibility enters and then the story just continues to unfold and it becomes very violent, very conflicted, uh, and now and God is continuing to always try to reconcile human humankind, uh, back to God's purposes.

President Veazey ([29:26](#)):

And that's kinda the overarching story of the gospel, including the coming of Jesus Christ. Um, restoring or restoration in that narrative is helping us a healthy, harmonious, peaceful lives and relationships again. And that can only occur in community, not in isolation. And it can only occur in community with people who are different from us, but we find a deeper level of, of love, uh, and relationship with each other. And it also extends to the whole creation. So initially in our church, people talked about restoration as a historic event that brought the church into being, but it's much larger than that. Those events reflected an ongoing process of God's, uh, self-disclosure and involvement in human history to keep introducing, uh, ways for us to come to understand what God was doing in Jesus Christ and make it relevant in our day. And, but the overall process of restoration is restoring a righteous relationships, which is in the biblical sense, just relationships, uh, with others, with the other dimensions of creation, and then being in a right relationship with God. And that's restoration.

Linda Booth ([31:14](#)):

Yes. Yes. And so the, and this question in that sermon points us in that, in that yeah,

President Veazey ([31:21](#)):

The essential meaning of restoration is on that level.

Linda Booth ([31:26](#)):

yes. As our prophet and president, you've always emphasized that Christ's mission is literally our mission.

President Veazey ([31:35](#)):

That's the being with Jesus with.

Linda Booth ([31:37](#)):

Exactly. And that we are to live Christ mission. And we had the five mission initiatives, the three that really reflected Christ mission of inviting people to Christ, abolishing poverty and ending suffering and

pursuing peace on earth. And then of course, the other two initiatives that help develop disciples and congregation. So develop disciples to serve and experience congregations and mission. So how does, um, what we've been talking about reflect or compliment these mission initiatives?

President Veazey ([32:12](#)):

Well, I, I think they go to go hand in hand and, and they, the questions keep us on track so we don't go off on tangents in our understanding of who Jesus was and he is. So the mission initiatives should always be carried out with the question in the back of our mind is this moving us, uh, in the direction of being with Jesus in his mission. And his mission was one of, um, compassion, um, one of revealing the grace of God, expanding concepts of inclusive community and then working for a more just society as a sign of the coming kingdom of God, which Jesus, his focus was on God's coming kingdom. It wasn't on a lot of the themes that we attribute to Jesus. He would, Jesus was focused on the kingdom of God and continues to be focused on the kingdom of God or the reign of God or the realm of God as being our ultimate salvation, the hope for creation and our calling to be living, uh, today. So the the question helps us stay on track and, and be focused in the mission initiatives. What are we developing disciples for? What are we asking congregations to do? Uh, what is the flavor of our evangelism inviting people to Christ? Well, we're inviting people to Christ the peaceful one and helping them understand that.

Linda Booth ([34:08](#)):

Yes, yes. I remember one time at some leaders gathering when someone asks you, and it was kind of a flippant question, but it really had a point to it too. So many times in the life of the church we've had different themes and we kind of follow that team faith to grow and you know, all these and they said something about the mission initiatives and I remember your response was, well, when I die, the mission initiatives are going to be on my tombstone. Because what you were saying to that person and to the group of leaders and to the true church church in its entirety, is that these mission or initiatives are not just a theme and they're not just something that we're going to talk about now, but this is something that we need to live and be and do with Jesus.

President Veazey ([34:55](#)):

They are as eternal as our faith in Christ says they shouldn't be as Christ is eternal because they are at the very heart of what Jesus was about.

Linda Booth ([35:08](#)):

Yes. Yes. Um, so you've been encouraging the church, uh, to chair share Christ's peace since you first became prophet president in 2005, I think that might've been the theme of your sermon. Was it share? Was it, what was the theme? Was

President Veazey ([35:25](#)):

Share the peace of Jesus Christ. Or the peace of Christ.

Linda Booth ([35:29](#)):

And so it seems obvious that God has been inspiring your journey as prophet president because God keeps reminding us about what's most important to God. Would you please share one of those God moments that helps us understand how God keeps you on track? And I'm focused and on message about how critical Christ peace is, not only for us as a church but for the world.



President Veazey ([35:55](#)):

Yeah. Um, well before I was ordained, I went on a personal retreat. It's been a lot of time just in reflection about the future of the church. And as I got beyond, you know, all the administrative questions and personnel questions and then say, okay, what really is to borrow from the discernment process, the heart of the matter, um, the phrase share the peace of Jesus Christ emerged out of that experience and, and I paid attention to it and started trying to articulate it. And, uh, in retrospect, maybe I should have just gotten up at that world conference, uh, following my ordination and said, share the peace of Jesus Christ. That's it. And it would have happened because I went on for about another 55 minutes and I think that was a little much, I was so passionate about it. I was trying to explain it and all it's implications.

President Veazey ([37:00](#)):

Since then, it keeps coming up as you're saying. So, so recently I pulled together, um, just for myself, all of my addresses and challenges to the church, like at world conference sermons or like it peace colloquies and I, I re-read them and I saw two things. One, uh, they became much shorter but to that theme was woven all the way through. Yeah. Um, and so it's not for lack of better thinking about what's essential, but I think sometimes God keeps say this is important, this is important, this is important. And then that's what we need to pay attention to.

Linda Booth ([37:59](#)):

Yeah. Pay attention, pay attention. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I, I want to thank you on behalf of the church, Steve, um, for the fact that you do listen and you do make it a personal, um, discipline to listen and listen in a Holy reverence to God's direction because it has made a difference in the church. And so I thank you. I also want to thank of listeners of Coffee Buzz watch for next month's coffee buzz episode, another intimate conversation this time with president Stassi Cramm, who's a counselor to President Veazey and providing presiding Bishop. So Steve, thank you so much for this conversation and for your insights. Thank you for the opportunity and listens. Remember the question, are you moving toward Jesus? Are you right there next to Jesus with Jesus? The peaceable one? Amen. Amen.

Music ([39:07](#)):

[inaudible],

Josh Mangelson ([39:09](#)):

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 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 ([40:05](#)):

[inaudible].