

Music ([00:15](#)):

[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]

Carla Long ([00:33](#)):

Hello and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host Carla Long, and if you thought this podcast was all about prophetic people did, I should have you on the podcast because you're a prophetic. This is our prophetic people series where we talk about what the term prophetic people means to different people in church. And tonight I have one of my favorites on, his name is Zac Harmon McLaughlin and Zac, I hate to tell them how long we've known each other, but it's been a really, really long time. It was probably December, like I don't know, 20 years ago. No, not that long ago.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([01:47](#)):

I'm not that old.

Carla Long ([01:48](#)):

15 years ago?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([01:50](#)):

That's probably more accurate. Yeah.

Carla Long ([01:51](#)):

Oh my goodness. Well, welcome to the podcast, Zac. Thanks so much for being here.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([01:56](#)):

Awesome. Do I introduce myself now?

Carla Long ([02:01](#)):

So tell us a little bit about yourself.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([02:05](#)):

Uh, so my name is Zac Harmon McLaughlin, as you stated. I currently am the director of the Community Christ Seminary at Graceland University. I just recently finished up my doctoral studies at San Francisco Theological Seminary and it's part of the Graduate Theological Union out in the Bay Area before coming to work for Graceland, I've worked with Community of Christ and various roles over the last decade, uh, the last of which was as a Mission Center President in Northern California and Western Nevada. So that's who I am.

Carla Long ([02:37](#)):

Ah, thanks Zac. Yeah, so Director of the Seminary. That sounds like a lot of fun. Actually

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([02:43](#)):

It can be. And if anyone's listening to this, you should totally come to the seminary. Uh, I like to remind people that everything is theological. So whether you are a small business owner, an educator, if you work in health care, you in theology. And so one of the things that we do in the Community of Christ seminary that can be really helpful is that we give people a tools, training and resources to really engage with people in a meaningful way along their journey of faith and spirituality. And you know, I think it's really important for people to participate in that and engage in that. Uh, and most importantly, we care about justice. And so a lot of the, the violence, violence and oppression and marginalization in the world comes from, uh, narratives and stories about faith that, that are irresponsible and inappropriate. Uh, and in the Community of Christ seminary, we, we teach responsible, and appropriate interpretation of scripture so that we can go out, create a welcoming and inclusive world of belonging, uh, that proclaims the worth of all people and ultimately leads us towards a peaceful kingdom. So if you're thinking about it, you should come.

Carla Long ([03:58](#)):

Yeah. And also it kind of sounded like you said, we teach inappropriate ways to use the Bible, but you probably said appropriate rather.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([04:05](#)):

I hope I said appropriate, although no, definitely, definitely appropriate.

Carla Long ([04:10](#)):

Slightly inappropriate at times. Um, so as you can tell, gentle listener, um, Zac is really passionate about what he does. And so one of the reasons I wanted to have him on this podcast about prophetic people was a friend of mine said, Hey, you do a series on Project Zion about prophetic people will Zac Mac is on Facebook right now writing about just that. And I said, well, I have to have him on. So Zac, let's jump into it. What does the word prophetic mean to you and what is your understanding of this term and Community of Christ?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([04:43](#)):

Yeah, so I mean, I think the term prophetic, right? It carries a lot of connotation in our society. And so I think you know, most common when when people hear the word prophet, so not just prophetic, but prophet in particular. I think people often kind of have this image of like a dictator in a community that just, you know, does whatever that prophet or dictator says, um, without any question or dialogue or debate. And so in Community of Christ is as a prophetic people, um, and being prophetic to me what that means is that we have a willingness to not know. And what I mean by that is to be prophetic is, is to listen to God. It is our ability to discern, to listen, and then articulate and interpret God's invitation to us to participate in God's preferred, preferred future. And so a prophetic in commune of Christ to me is really an invitation into ambiguity and to mystery into liminality.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([05:57](#)):

And basically what I mean by that is if you explore scripture and you go through the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament and you begin to look at all the prophetic voices, you'll begin to notice something that you cannot be a prophet and already know the will of God or what God is up to. What makes you a prophet is that you have a willingness to not know. And my favorite example of that is Moses in Exodus three you know, he sees the burning Bush, he runs up to the burning Bush. God says, Moses, Moses, take off your your shoes, right? He takes off his shoes. And of course he says, here I am Lord. Then so after, after Moses has had a willingness to notice God and be Reverend and attentive to God's presence in Moses's life, he says, here I here, here, here I am, God.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin (06:52):

Then God begins to invite Moses into this task. You need to go to Egypt. You need to free my people. At which point Moses begins to have questions. He's like, wait a minute, do you know who you're talking to? Like this is impossible. Are you sure? I don't know. And so, so Moses literally begins to engage in doubt and wonder and ambiguity and mystery. And so to be prophetic Community of Christ, it's our ability to show up to the presence of God and be willing to listen, to pay attention to what God is inviting us to. Knowing that, you know, our job is not to, to have clarity and certainty about every fact of what may or may not happen in the future. Our priority is rather to listen, to discern, to be prayerful and thoughtful, and then engage with God as we work toward God toward God's preferred future.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin (07:53):

And so for me, the term prophetic is really invitational. It's exciting because it's a, it essentially tells every single person right off the bat, you matter. God, God has something for you. God is inviting you to something, God is speaking to you and God becomes both this intimate and communal thing simultaneously. So that's a I, I mean, I could kind of ramble about this for a long time, but I think in general, the word prophetic is an invitation to the whole community in the community of Christ to slow down, to listen, to wrestle with doubt and wonder and mystery, and then begin to engage in the hard, complex task of cultivating the peaceable kingdom.

Carla Long (08:50):

Whoa. Prophetic means a lot to you.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin (08:54):

It does.

Carla Long (08:55):

That's big. That's big. So I'm almost scared to ask, how has this understanding of prophetic and, or prophetic people evolved over your lifetime? Oh, the church.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin (09:08):

Yeah. So for sure, like a lot, right? I mean, I think that's the point of being a prophetic people is that it's, it's consistently moving. One of my favorite things about the commune of crisis, how we articulate ourselves as a movement. We're naturally fluid people. We're not stuck in rigidity. We're excited to proclaim that we're non credal, right? That you don't have to make a statement of belief or proclamation of faith to be a part of this community. So being a prophetic people is a naturally evolving, moving thing. So in my lifetime, you know, I think when I was a child early on, prophetic people was a much more authoritarian idea, right?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([09:58](#)):

That there's a prophet, the prophet has a revelation and then we do our best to participate or follow that revelation, engaging in whatever, right? The older I've gotten, the more that authoritarian lens has drifted away. And it's become, as I said earlier, kind of this invitational framework where to be a prophetic people is that while yes, the Community of Christ has a prophet, um, that's very different than saying we have a dictator. You know, I think our, our prophet is the one who begins to facilitate that mystery and that period of discernment with the community. And as a theocratic democracy, you know, we have the opportunity to wrestle with that to just like Moses did or, or even in, since we're in advent, you know, just like Mary did when, when the angel shows up and is like, Mary, you're pregnant. She's like, no, not me.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([10:55](#)):

You've got the wrong person. Right? And so the idea of being a prophetic people. Now as I'm older and the more and more I, I study about our identity as Christians and as disciples, the more and more being a prophetic people is, is an authentic invitation for community to really begin to slow down and understand who it is we are being called to be so that we can participate with God in the world to create transformation, to create what we may refer to in Christianity as a, Oh, what is the word? It's on the tip of my tongue, resurrection in the world. So, you know, it changes a lot, but it's an exciting thing. It's an exciting idea to be part of a movement that articulates this idea that we aren't just a group with a prophet. Rather each one of us has prophetic insight.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([12:01](#)):

Um, each one of us has prophetic wisdom. Each one of us has prophetic capacity to engage with God, interpret God, listen to God and respond to God. And the last thing I'll say, and then we can move on, and then I apologize to all the listeners. I'm a 70 and I, you know, I tend to just kinda get a little preachy so I apologize for that. But the last thing I'll say about it, the other piece that has kind of evolved for me, so as a 70 in the Community of Christ, I've always kind of been naturally a kingdom builder, right? I've always been, had my gears focused on what are we going to do? How are we going to do it? The, the more and more I engage with my interior life as well as my discipleship and identity in Christ, the more I realized that to be a prophetic people is to constantly bring ourselves back to the why question and, and, and the why always happens before the what and the how.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([13:00](#)):

And what I mean by that is, uh, to be prophetic means that we have to always be listening to and articulating why is it that we gather in community? Why are we proclaiming Jesus Christ? Who are we, who are we being called to be? And, and as we begin to discern that and focus on that, then we can begin. Once we have a sense of clarity on that, then we can begin to say this is what that looks like, this is how we do that. But the prophetic side gives us focus. It gives us this laser focus to really hone in and say, okay, to be a prophetic people means this and this is who we are. This is what we're about and this is how we engage the world in that way.

Carla Long ([13:55](#)):

I'm going to go back to something that you said. Um, cause it really surprised me actually when you talked about a 70 and you especially Zac Mac talked about slowing down. I do feel like in Community of Christ in the last however many years, maybe two decades, we have had this really intention on slowing down. Like when president VZ was chosen as the next prophet president of the church, we took six

months to do that and we were willing to be vulnerable and willing to let God be a part of that rather than human being saying this is it. This is the only thing there is. And so I, I'm really intrigued by this idea that to be a prophetic people we have to slow down. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([14:37](#)):

Yeah, I can probably talk too much about this. So I think this is actually a really important point and so I'm glad you kind of grabbed onto it. And so, so in the United States really since about 1988 but, but kinda of, uh, sped up aggressively since 2000, we've seen a shift in Christianity, right? And, um, so in 2012, for the first time in the United States history, the majority of the country were no longer Protestant Christians. Uh, we dropped to 48%. That was the first time in the history of this country that there wasn't a clear majority of Protestant Christians in the United States. So as Christianity changes as, as peoples yearning for spiritual community, sacred community shifts, this is a really important piece because we talk a lot, uh, you know, I've talked a lot with pastors, various leaders throughout the church about how are we going to fix the church?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([15:39](#)):

How are we going to grow the church again, right? Like how are we going to address all these really complex major problems? And the more and more I've studied this context and the demographics and all this stuff, the more and more I've been led to this reality of, you know what our job is right now. It is not to do more. It's to slow down. In fact, do less. Like the job of a prophetic people isn't to create the most shiny new thing in the spiritual world. The, the newest product to be consumed, the newest thing to be done, the most attractive worship, the most authentic thing we can do as a prophetic body is stop and listen to God. And so if we're really, really honest with ourselves, if we find ourselves in a place where we feel like our congregation or our sacred community is beginning to fall apart or even die, I think that the natural kind of reaction is, all right, let's circle the wagons.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([16:45](#)):

Let's get the best brains in here and let's fix it. Let's find the solution and X, Y, Z. We're going to fix the problem. The response from the prophet is not not this, Hurry up and go idea. The response from a prophet is we must not be listening to God. We must have missed the invitation. And and what's ironic is in the church we always try to do the fixing and how often do we slow down and say, wait a minute, this isn't ours to fix. We are ambassadors of God. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. Our job as disciples is not to think we have all the answers that we know how to, how to make this work. The prophet steps back in prayer and discernment, and even Jesus does this, right? Like even when things are falling apart, Jesus retreats and spiritual practice and discernment and prayer.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([17:39](#)):

And so I think now of all times as Christianity in the United States shifts, our job is not to come up with a new shiny program or formula or model and say, okay, we found the magic bullet. If you do this, this is going to work. This is going to attract that demographic of 18 to 35 year olds. You're going to get young families getting blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. In all my research for my dissertation and for other things, you know what I found? People don't want something new. They in fact, they want something very ancient. They want an Acts II experience. They want authentic, intentional, vulnerable community. And that most often happens in communities that slow down and discernment. Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying don't do things. I'm not saying don't engage, uh, in justice and peace in the world. What I am saying is if, if we're simply running programs to run programs and we haven't

slowed down to focus on our why or engage in that prophetic voice of God, what are you inviting us to it?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([18:50](#)):

Does it matter how many years we've done the Turkey dinner or, or the backpack program? If those things aren't directly connected to our prophetic response to God's invitation, we have to stop and say, why are we doing this? How has God called us into this? And so I actually, you know, lately have been inviting congregations to stop, stop burning yourselves out, stop running yourselves ragged to try to attract or create something that may or may not exist. Rather, let's retreat in prayer. God, what are you up to in our lives? What are you up to in our neighborhood and our community? What are you inviting us into and what does that look like? That's what a prophetic community does. A prophetic community, you know, slows down long enough to notice the burning bush. You know what happens if we don't notice the burning bush? We just keep on pushing the sheep up the same mountain that we've been on a hundred times before.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([19:54](#)):

The only way things begin to change is when we slow down long enough for encounter to happen in the midst of our prophetic identity. And this is true for us. Like I don't know why we wrestled with this because this is true. Most of the great ideas in our congregations come from someone's testimony or encounter with God through discernment, right? It's people who have had these moments in prayer where they're like, we need to engage with our neighborhood and provide food and clothing to our neighbors because this is what God is up to. And next thing you know that the congregation has a food pantry and a closed thing bank, right? And so, you know, the job is not to be mindless doers for the kingdom. The job is to understand our context, to slow down and listen to God's invitation and then participate with God.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([20:48](#)):

That's a significant difference perhaps than in the past. And so, uh, that's kinda what I meant by that and how I still, I, I'm really passionate about, I don't want us to just simply do things for the sake of doing them. I really want us to pay attention and do things with intention, with purpose, and with focus so that we can sustainably transform the world and begin the work of Zion, begin cultivating tangibly the peaceable kingdom of God. So I could probably go on and on about that for some time, but that's probably a safe place to stop.

Carla Long ([21:29](#)):

Well, that, I mean, that sounds amazing. And so how do we develop that prophetic courage to do that? How do we develop that to, to slow down that the, the trust, I guess to slow down.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([21:46](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Cause we're so afraid of death, right? Like what happens if, if we slow down, you know, are people going to go to the church next door or are they, you know, and we're a Do'er culture, right? Like you're not successful unless you have 1500 meetings every day. Right? Like success in our culture is very much based on doing and all that spiritual stuff. All that being stuff that's mystical and not really, it doesn't, doesn't have the same meaning, which, which is really, it's silliness. And so I think the place it starts is just with us beginning to understand who we are. Uh, it, it really is a vision. There's a, I forget

which Psalm it is exactly that Psalm that says where there is no vision, my people perish. I think that Psalm invites us into a reality to say it's okay to evaluate and, and look at who we are.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([22:44](#)):

We don't have to simply keep doing the same things just to do them, uh, for the sake of doing them. I mean, it makes it, it really doesn't make a whole lot of sense. And so, so I think slowing down really starts with an intentional place of asking ourselves, who are we? Who has got inviting us to be? And then engaging in that. And this is authentic to our Christian story, right? So one of the things that Christian churches hate is the idea of death. What happens if this program dies? Then we failed. Uh, and we, we rest in that failure as, as if that is like the biggest blow in the biggest negative in the world for our congregations. Here's the problem, Carla, we're disciples of Jesus and we know that death is not the end of things. We know that when death happens, what happens right after death, resurrection new life.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([23:42](#)):

So we know the Christian story is life, death, life, death, resurrection. Being a prophetic people engaging in discernment is our willingness. It is this that prophetic courage to say, if this thing dies, if this Turkey dinner dies, if we slow down and let it die, a graceful, dignified, meaningful death, rejoicing for the saints that have poured their heart and soul into this incredible thing that has blessed hundreds or thousands of people. If we let it die prophetically, how will God raise it up again? How will God resurrect this congregation, this community, this collection of saints so that we can go out in the world and continue the hard disparate work of creating transformative kingdoms of God in the world here in now. And so that's part of where that courage comes from. It takes an incredible amount of courage for the disciples to stand in front of the cross and watch Jesus die and think everything we've known, everything we've put our heart in is gone.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([25:00](#)):

And they weep. And it's sad and it's hard. And as they walk down the road, away from the cross, Jesus shows up and says, what are you doing? Do not be afraid. Here I am. And they sprint back to tell the others what they've experienced, right? And their whole world changes. And so this is hard. It's scary, it's uncertain. It's a mystery. But like I said earlier, that's how we know we're being prophetic. We don't know. We live in that ambiguity and that mystery and we trust and faith that we're participating with God in God's cultivation and creation of God's preferred future. So all of those things are what kind of give us courage. And, and the last kind of comment I'll make is this the most common phrase in all of scripture. Hebrew Bible, New Testament over 296 times God or Jesus say, do not be afraid.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([26:06](#)):

And more often than not, that's followed with for I am with you. So, so this repetitive idea, do not be afraid or fear not, um, often followed with for I am with you, right? This idea is almost as if Jesus is trying to remind the disciples, listen, I know this is scary. I know this is hard. I know you have doubts and you think I'm crazy. Do not be afraid. My peace I give you, everything's going to be okay through prayer and Thanksgiving, right? These are all scriptural ideas. They're there in the Doctrine and Covenants are in scripture. We find them all over the place, but yet we still have this deep seated desire to be in control, to be able to, to, to fix things and have certainty with things. And so that's where that courage comes from. Our willingness to step back, to slow down, to let certain things fail so that other things can succeed too.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([27:03](#)):

To stop trying to create new wheels and, and slow down long enough to let God actually do what God does in community to, to let the spirit breathe and participate with that. You know, and, and there is, there is no right or wrong way here, right? Like it's all driven by the context of our local communities and how, how we engage with one another. And so what works in one place won't work in another place. There is no one size fits all approach to this. It's our, you know, our context and our neighborhood and, and how we begin to participate with God and God's invitation to us.

Carla Long ([27:48](#)):

Wow. That's, that's a lot to unpack Zac.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([27:52](#)):

Sorry.

Carla Long ([27:53](#)):

No, no, it's so good. Um, I, I mean I think like if I wanted to take out like some practical, a little parts of what you said, there's, there's one thing you said that has really stood out to me that's let go of your need of control. And that is, I think that that has also been a message from God for a long, long time. Let go of your need to know what's going to happen. Let go of your need to be right, let go of your need to make sure that everything is just exactly the way you like it because that's because all you're going to get is the same stuff that you've been getting. You're not going to get anything else. So that letting go of control seems like a a pretty big deal. Yeah, so

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([28:37](#)):

I, I'll just say this, right, like I have three degrees now in religion and you know what? I know the only thing I know with with any amount of certainty, I am not God. I'm a part of God. I participate with God. God is a part of me, but I am not God and I can't tell you like how many times as a mission center president or even as director of the seminary, God is nudging me to do something and I'm like, God, I don't have time for that. I'm too busy running the church. I'm too busy doing this church work, and then I hit. Then I stepped back. I'm like, Oh man, I missed it. I'm like, Oh wait, ah, God was inviting me to something and I was too busy thinking that this church thing was all about me, my agenda in what I bring to the table when in reality I am a vessel for God in the world.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([29:31](#)):

And so another kind of practical piece I guess, uh, was an experience I had as a pastor. I, you know, as a pastor in this congregation that had resources and, and we had a pretty large facility and like many congregations, we spent a lot of money on that facility to, to keep it open and to keep it running. And this kind of at some point got frustrating, right? Like we're spending so much money on this, this building. And so we kind of changed the conversation to say, listen, we will spend money on any project we need to, if we can answer this question, what does this have to do with the mission of Jesus Christ? And if we can't answer that, then we won't do it. You know, which caused concern like, well Zac, I don't know how plumbing has to do what that has to do with the mission of Jesus Christ, but we need to fix the plumbing.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([30:20](#)):

It's like it doesn't matter if we can't articulate how that's connected the mission of Jesus Christ, we're not going to do it. Well, the building needed painting, right? And, and it was going to be something like, I don't know, 20 \$30,000. It was really expensive because it was a large facility and everybody knew the building needed painted. But the question was, we will do this if we can answer the question, what does this have to do with the mission of Jesus Christ? If we can't answer that question, we won't do it. And so we had a lot of debate about it, a lot of frustration. Like this is silly. We just need to paint the building. Everybody knows we need to paint the building. The building hasn't been painted in 20 some years, you know, obviously blah blah blah. And it's like, if this is just a building and, and we're just painting it for the sake of painting it, what's the point?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([31:06](#)):

So finally somebody finally said, I think I can add to this. Our building is a symbol to our community. If we paint the building, uh, make it look fresh and clean, um, that will symbolize to our community that this was a safe place where they're welcomed to where they belong, that they can come and find sanctuary. And so by painting the building, we're engaging with the mission of Jesus Christ by making sure that people see this place, uh, as an invitation to peace, as an invitation to community. And so that's how this is connected to the mission of Jesus Christ. And it was like, yes, boom, let's sign the check. Let's do it. That changes the lens. That changes the way in which we think about this stuff. So rather than just painting the building and paint the building, all of a sudden the building became a missional asset, a missional tool to say, this isn't just a building.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([32:02](#)):

This is a place where community gathers to be safe. To find belonging to experience peace and transformation. That's why we paint the building. Um, and so that's kind of an anecdotal, practical thing of this is that's kind of what this looks like. Stepping back to say, ah, we're, we're not just going to do status quo anymore. Um, status quo in the world has gotten us Wars, marginalization, oppression, uh, us, them narratives that create, you know, polarization. What we need now is to slow down and participate in God's invitation, uh, in the church so that we can radically and innovatively change the world. Awesome.

Carla Long ([32:47](#)):

Awesome. Oh, is that, this is such an exciting conversation. I'm really enjoying what you have to say and I find it really exciting. So like my, I don't know if we're heading this direction and you can tell me if you don't think we are, but one of my usual questions for people in this prophetic people series is for you, what was the prophetic in? And then I have this whole list of the concept of Zion, ordination of women, lenses of discernment, the LGBTQ plus diversity and leadership attention to the poor international diversity and going across borders for a ministry, nonviolence process of common consent or signal communities. Would you want to talk about how you see prophetic in one or two of those things?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([33:31](#)):

I want to talk about to be prophetic in all of those things.

Carla Long ([33:35](#)):

I know, I know you do, but I'm going to, I'm going to have to go to bed at some point.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([33:39](#)):

Nope. Nope. This is going to be a four hour Project Zion, everyone.

Carla Long ([33:44](#)):

Everyone needs to get comfortable apparently.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([33:51](#)):

Okay. So I will start though by saying everything is prophetic when it's done in partnership with God, which is what makes these topics so captivating and meaningful, right? Is that these are things that are unaccomplishable unless we work collaboratively and collectively as community with God. And so that's really important. And that's kind of like earlier when I said everything's theological, um, I really mean that everything here is prophetic when it's done in partnership with God. So, I guess the one that really grabs me is probably the LGBT LGBTQ plus, uh, issue or reality in the community of Christ. And, and the reason I say that is my wife, Katie and I were really blessed to play a role in the United States national conference in 2013, or the community of Christ addressed same sex ordination and same sex marriage. Our job at that conference was to, uh, be responsible for the moments of blessing. And, you know, as you recall, um, I'm making an assumption there, but as I recall, you know, just the, um, the weight of this issue on a diverse body, right?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([35:14](#)):

Because the Community of Christ, while we may have a progressive theology, we're a very diverse body in terms of thought, in terms of, uh, conservative and progressive. And we have, uh, that's one of the things that makes us so beautiful is that, you know, we have such a diverse community like that. And so going into that national conference, you know, you could just the weight of this issue, uh, in the sense of what is going to happen, how are we gonna do this? Uh, and so there's three kind of quick stories that I'd like to share about that and how those, that was a prophetic experience for me. And if this goes along, I really apologize, but I'll try to make it quick. So I remember showing up, uh, for that national conference and like I said, my wife and I played a role in that too, to a degree anyway.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([36:07](#)):

I mean, everybody kind of played a role in that conference. I remember being backstage before the conference started with the USA apostles and my wife and I made, you know, at the time I was somewhere in my twenties and I was a bit silly and goofy and I may be kind of off the hand flippant comment, like, we're gonna do this. And I was referring to the moments of blessing. Like, don't worry everybody, we got this, everything's good. Right? That whole control thing we talked about. And I'll never forget Linda Booth. Grabbing my hand and looking me in the eyes and the most humbling way ever and saying, no, Zac, God's going to do this. And having a moment like just being totally confronted with the reality of my arrogance and the presence of the spirit just like that. And in this moment of, you're right, this has nothing to do with us and our human capacities and abilities.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([37:16](#)):

This has everything with our ability to show up and be present with God in participate with God as we become who we're being called to be. And so that was like before the gavel had even swang before the conference that even started backstage and just being confronted by the power of the Spirit in that. The second part of that conference that was overwhelmingly prophetic. We, um, and you may or may not remember for those of you listening that were there, one of the moments of blessings that we did was we created a communion scene up on the stage. And so one by one people came up to the stage and

one person brought a tablecloth, one person brought the bread, one person brought grapes right? There were four people participating and Katie and I had intentionally asked very diverse people, um, to participate in that.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([38:06](#)):

So there were people who were undecided on the issue. Um, there was one, one person named Charles who was at the time very against the issue. Uh, and then there, there was another person who was actually gay himself who was participating. And I'll never forget, we had told them when and where to meet the day. We knew we were going to do this. I invited them to sit down. And of course, the people who disagreed right instantly to argue. And it was, I'm right, here's why and know I'm right. Here's why. And there was this, it was loving, but it was very clear like, Hey, we disagree. Anyway, long story short, these men who disagreed ended up on stage together and, and what people may or may not know that this was largely unscripted. And the group that was up there stopped and they, they held hands and they began to pray and it was just a really beautiful moment.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([39:10](#)):

And then we ended with a blessing. It was right before lunchtime. And so I ran up on a stage to get all this stuff to tear it down so the conference could continue. And as I was up there, the two of them who you know, were just at each other's throats about their disagreements, I watched as they came over and embraced one another. And Charles looked into the eyes of this gay man and said, I love you. And in response he heard, I love you too. And it was just this powerful moment of even in the midst of this polarized diversity of opinion, we somehow are unified and our sense of calling to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in the world. And then the last piece that made that experience, so prophetic for me was the very last day of the conference when we took the final vote.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([40:16](#)):

And you know, ultimately we, we voted in approval of both same sex ordination and marriage in the United States and you know, rather than shoes and hollers and excitement, it was this humbling moment where joy and sorrow kind of held hands cause we knew that some people were really upset and devastated in the room and we knew that other people were so excited and joyful in the room and everyone kind of had a reference for one another. But then the most amazing thing happened after that. And I just happened to have the privilege of being on the stage. We began to sing. We are one in the spirit and what people may or may not have known about that moment is we began to sing there. There must have been a thousand people up in the balcony who were actually delegates of the conference as we were seeing, we are one in the spirit.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([41:13](#)):

Everyone in the balcony arose and stood in for me in my vantage point of being on a stage, it was almost as if the community was embracing itself, hugging itself in the midst of this painful, exciting, joyful moment. And then after they were standing, the whole body stood and the whole chamber was filled with standing and instantly hands were reaching across aisles and grabbing other hands as we sang this anthem of belonging in the spirit. And the prophetic idea of that this is not about us, this goes beyond my personal agenda, my personal identity, my personal desires, and actually puts us in the space of God. It's a burning Bush moment where we take off our shoes and we're like, here I am. I mean, it was powerful and, uh, certainly on a personal level transforming for me, but also for the United States. Uh, just such a moment of prophetic call and transformation, one that still to this day, six years later, we're

still living into, we're still discovering more about what that means and how to do that more authentically and more vulnerably. And so, uh, that, that happens to be a theological topic in the church in particular that, that I've just experienced such profound prophetic calling into. And you know, a unique piece of that is that the community of Christ for once actually beat the federal government to a decision there. Um, and I, I just think that is again, a signal of our ability to slow down and listen to God's invitation to us as a body.

Carla Long ([43:13](#)):

Those, those are some beautiful moments and certainly prophetic moments for sure. Maybe brought a tear or two to my eyes. Zach

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([43:23](#)):

Maybe brought one or two to mine as well.

Carla Long ([43:26](#)):

Well we are very similar people. Um, gosh thank you so much for sharing that. I really appreciate that. And your, your last comments about singing. We are, one of the spirit brought us back to, it feels like where we started a little bit, um, that to be prophetic you would just have to hand over all of yourself or most parts of yourself or something to somewhere that you don't just don't know where and you just don't know what exactly cause it's mystery. So you hand over your parts of yourself and you let God take you where you need to go.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([44:06](#)):

Yeah.

Carla Long ([44:08](#)):

Well it's so scary.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([44:10](#)):

Yeah, I can, can I with your comment on that? Can I read you a quote from St John on the cross of the cross?

Carla Long ([44:18](#)):

If you have to. Of course you can.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([44:18](#)):

I do. I so St John of the cross, uh, you know, as a Christian mistake and, and I think he, he speaks so clearly to this journey, which is actually a really positive, some of the language you use as you may think, uh, have a negative connotation, but it's actually really beautiful and positive. He says this, he says, to reach a new and unknown land in journey along unknown roads, travelers cannot be guided by their own knowledge. Instead, they have doubts about their own knowledge and seek the guidance of others. Obviously they cannot reach new territory or attain this added knowledge if they do not take these new and unknown roads and abandoned those familiar ones.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([45:05](#)):

Similarly, people learning new details about their art or trade must work in darkness and not with what they already know. If they refuse to lay aside their former knowledge, they will never make any further progress. The soul too, when it advances walks in darkness and unknowing. And I just think that's such a beautiful idea that, you know, the prophet, the prophetic body too, to be prophetic and live in to God's invitation means we have to set aside all our preconceived ideas and assumptions about who God is and how God is so that we can live authentically into who we are becoming with God. And that is a powerful, provocative idea and a world that seeks status quo and comfort. The prophet seeks transformation and innovation, not in terms of success, but in terms of justice and peace and belonging so that people, regardless of race, creed, sexuality, identity, that they find themselves of worth and of dignity and in a place of belonging, I mean in God, in community. And, and that's, that is a message that the world desperately needs to hear.

Carla Long ([46:39](#)):

Amen. Amen. Amen. My goodness, Zac, you've given me a lot to think about and I, I really appreciate having you on this podcast. Um, we're coming to the close of the podcast. Is there anything else that you want to say or question that I didn't ask that you wish I would have asked? Well, Carl, there's like a million,

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([47:03](#)):

I'd like to say. No, I won't. Um, I won't, I will. I will simply, and you know, with a comment about, you know, it can be scary to be a prophetic people. And I think there's a lot of us that want to know what's in store in the future. You know, I think that's a pretty natural thing. One of my favorite quotes, and I don't know who wrote this off the top of my head, uh, the quote is, our greatest fear is not the unknown. Our greatest fear is what we think we know. That's so true. I'm not afraid of the future because I don't know it. I'm afraid of the future because I, I think I have assumptions about what I think it may be. Right. Um, and I think this is true both in our personal discipleship and in our, our congregational settings.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([47:59](#)):

And so as, as we seek to find that courage and vulnerability to be a prophetic people, I encourage us to set down our assumptions and preconceived ideas about what God wants and how God wants it and the perfect structure and system. And you know, order and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Set that down, let it go. Let's participate with God as begin as, uh, people who have no idea what we're doing and who are simply striving to listen to God and participate with God. And, and you may notice that that's many if not all of the prophets throughout scripture. They rarely had any idea what they were doing, but they certainly had a willingness and courage to show up, to pay attention. But perhaps most importantly, they had a willingness, encouraged to slow down. And when they were uncertain, they didn't push forward. They retreated in prayer. Uh, they, they participated with God. They didn't, it didn't participate for God. And, and so I just, I invite us into becoming a prophetic people, not out of perfection, but out of curiosity and how powerful and exciting that is.

Carla Long ([49:20](#)):

Ooh, I liked that. Participating with God and not participating for God. Ooh, that's good, Zach. That's good. Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for being on the podcast. Thank you for saying yes to discussing this. I'm so glad that, um, Brittany caught you talking about this on Facebook so that I could interview you about it because I think what you've said has been really, really important for me to hear.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin ([49:48](#)):

Thanks Carla. I appreciate the invitation. Anytime.

Music ([49:56](#)):

[inaudible]

Josh Mangelson ([49:58](#)):

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Speaker 1 ([50:54](#)):

[inaudible].