

Project Zion Podcast
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Josh Mangelson

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts the Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Linda Booth

Welcome to the seventh episode of Coffee Buzz. My name is Linda Booth. I'm a retired Community of Christ apostle and director of communication, having served nearly 22 years in both of these roles and lately, one of the opportunities that I've been enjoying is hosting this podcast, which features a member of the Community of Christ First Presidency. Today, you're invited to listen in on the Buzz with President Stassi Cramm, one of two counselors to President Steve Veazey, and we're going to talk about how to disagree. A relevant topic in today's world. Welcome, my friend Linda. Before we get started on faithful disagreement, I'd like to get an update on your family, especially, I know your daughter Shannon's in the midst of wedding plans, and so your mother-in-law of the bride. How's that going? And also I know you recently returned from a family vacation or reunion with your son, Spencer, who lives in Japan.

Stassi Cramm

Yes, so as far as the wedding, Shannon and her fiancé, Kevin, are doing a great job. Their number one priority is how to get everything accomplished within the budget that they set for themselves. So Dad and I are very happy about their good stewardship. We feel like some of our teachings have actually settled in in great ways, and I feel like I've done my most important part for the wedding. That is, I've bought my dress.

Linda Booth

Yay!

Linda Booth

And Steve is excited because I found it on a clearance sale at the end of the year, so it was perfect. But we're really excited about the opportunity to be together with them and to celebrate their love and the joining together of families. And that actually kind of relates to our family reunion. Steve and I had a chance to spend a week with Shannon and Kevin. We did a cruise together in the Caribbean, so that was great fun. And then we all landed in Disney World, where Spencer joined us. But in addition to Spencer, we also had Kevin's parents, who are from Michigan, join us. So we had an extended family reunion and got to kind of experience what it's gonna be like to be altogether and the time with family was really wonderful. But we did thoroughly enjoy all Star Wars, things that are new at Disney World.

Linda Booth

And also then didn't you meet up with your parents too?

Stassi Cramm

We had spent time with our parents over Christmas and with Steve's mom. So yeah, we did kind of a family reunion with Steve, part of the family in December and actually with Kevin's parents. We had a moment with them. So, really, all of the family have Now we've met, except for one of Kevin's brothers. So that's kind of nice that we were able to do all of that before we get into the actual wedding event.

Linda Booth

Very, very nice. So we're gonna dive right into Faithful Disagreement, and I don't think of, I can't think of any other time when people seem to be so divided. Yes, the word commonly used to describe this situation is polarized and often relates to politics or liberal versus conservative points of view. However, on social media and in conversations, it just seems let people to contain a controversial issue like abortion or even a more minor issue, like changing a city street name and vehemently argue about it and they speak passionately from both sides, often personally berating or attacking those who think differently. And as a result, relationships are severed in. People are unfriended on Facebook because they have mean spirited disagreements or they don't want associate with that person because that person has a different opinion and disagreeing in harmful way can impact families. Recently, a friend told me over lunch that when she has a family gathering, her two daughters get into such nasty arguments that she's had to intervene, which is very upsetting to her and all the family. And disagreeing also impacts congregations. I preached in a congregation where a man pulled me aside to say how upset he was because two families had left the congregation because they had disagreed with the pastor over some issue. And, of course, in the 1980's, our faith movements splintered when women were ordained to the priesthood and thousands left the church because they didn't agree, and some families no longer worship together because they disagreed. So this is a serious topic now and in the past and in the future, because as members of the human family and disciples of Jesus Christ, I believe it's critical that we can find ways to disagree and still be united in our diversity, right?

Stassi Cramm

Yes, definitely!

Linda Booth

And I know the church leadership has talked about this issue. So tell us about how the Faithful Disagreement Definition and Principles which was solidified or agreed upon in March of 2013 by the World Church Leadership Council and listeners can find it on the CofChrist website. So how can these principles help us learn to disagree in a more responsible, faithful way?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, this is a really important topic, Linda, like you said, and I agree that that we live in a world that feels very divided sometimes. And I think the worst thing that could happen is that everybody pulls apart into little groups where birds of a feather flock together, because one of our Enduring Principles is Unity and Diversity. And so we acknowledge and accept that it's

important to have diverse perspectives and that we're able to get more at the heart of what God's vision is for the world and for people together. When we listen to all those diverse perspectives as you would know, and probably a lot of our listeners know Community of Christ is established as a theocratic democracy. I laugh every time I say that world word, because it sounds kind of so official, but it really is an important term. It's a term that Joseph Smith, the third, used to help describe the nature of how the church decides things together. And it's a term now that is found in the Community of Christ by laws and people confined the bylaws on the church's website as well. Theocratic democracy means that we acknowledge our call to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit in decision making. That's the theocratic part, the God part. But ultimately we really are about trying to seek to do God's will and and everything we do and all the decisions we make, whether they're small or big. We really want to be about moving forward God's purposes. So that means that as people we have to work together to find, you know what that will really is all about. This concept of theocratic democracy gets expressed through the body, trying to discover God's will together, but then making specific decisions that allows the body to move forward. And that's where the democracy part comes in Doctrine and Covenants. 27:4 c so a really old section of the Doctrine and Covenants at the very end of that paragraph says, for all things must be done in order and by common consent in the church by the prayer of faith. So really, the concept of common consent trying to agree together. Trying to get the body to move generally in the same direction goes back to our very roots. And as you've already noted, when making important or significant decisions as a group, it is very difficult to reach 100% agreement. I know you've been involved where we talk about what is sufficient agreement so that we can move forward, and yet it really is important that the church keeps moving forward. So I do know that there are some movements that wait to make a decision until they have 100% agreement. But our practice and experience has been that we try to get as many people as we can to agree on the way forward on and then we make a decision and we trust in the blessings of the Holy Spirit. You mentioned the decision to ordain women, and clearly this was one of those difficult moments when the majority wanted to proceed. But there were many who did not support the understanding. And that's where Faithful Disagreement becomes a tool to help the body move forward together when implementing a decision where everyone is not in agreement. The definition of Faithful Disagreement acknowledges that these moments will occur in the life of the body, and it upholds that faithful people do not always come to 100% agreement on what God's will is on a particular topic. But the fact that we don't all agree doesn't mean that some are more faithful than the others. The principal then provides guidance on how people treat each other. When this situation occurs, sometimes a picture helps, and so I tend to think of faithful disagreement off the situation of the parable that I know everyone's heard of before, where there's three blind people who are all holding a different part of the elephant, they cannot agree on the nature of what they're touching, and they assume that they are all touching something different, or that at least the other two people are completely misinterpreting what they're touching. Now obviously that's an oversimplification for complex theological questions that the group has to decide together. But it does give us this understanding of what it might be like as a body of people to live in the mystery of God and to try to, um, put particulars on what God's intentions are for the body at any particular point in time. It's clear that faithful people sometimes end up with different conclusions, and we have to do the very best we can to find a

way to move forward together while remaining open to continued revelation. Of course, continued revelation is both an enduring principle and a basic belief. So it's really critically important to our identity. The 12 Principles of Faithful Disagreement guide groups in how to make room for each other and find common ground while making space for different perspectives that are not currently supported by the whole. It also makes space for God to continue to provide God's intentions to us. So if a group is wanting to learn more about the faithful disagreement than 12 principles, there are actually six lessons that are found on the church's website, and so I want to make sure that people are aware of those six lessons because that's a great way for a group to unpack both the definition and the principles.

Linda Booth

Excellent Stassi, and reminds me of going through the national conference specifically in United States, where you and I were both involved and how we learned to listen and to try to understand. And you're right. We didn't reach 100% agreement, but the stakes were high and was way over 80% who agreed with the decision of that conference. But that Faithful Disagreement allowed congregations even when delegates went home who were in disagreement to remain part of the body a vital part of the body even though they disagreed.

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, that is absolutely true. It it feels bad when you are the voice that's not the final decision, and it would be so easy to pull away from everyone else and say and feel like your voice is not valued and Faithful Disagreement helps remind us that everyone's voice is important and everyone's perspective is important.

Linda Booth

Yes, because often when we're in conversation with someone that we don't agree with, we listened so that we can give a counter argument instead of listening to understand the person's perspective and the Faithful Disagreement paper encourages us to quote, listen respectfully to one another's viewpoints. In addition, we try to see from each other's perspective. So, Stassi, how can each of us learn or practice respectful listening as well as understanding another person's perspective or stated in a different way, walk in that person's shoes?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, there's a really good questions. I'm not an expert, but I sure have done a lot of reading on this. And from my reading and from my experience, those who study interpersonal interactions would indicate that most of us engage in conversations where we hold a different perspective from the other as opportunities to change the other person's mind. And I think that's what leads to the scenarios that you talked about because as soon as you start talking, I'm looking for clues that what I can say so that I could get you to a different place. Interestingly the more important topics are, and the more the other person matters to us sometimes the more compelled we are to try and change their mind. For instance, Um, I might say I'm worried about my husband's health. I want him to live a very long and prosperous life, and there's moments in our life where I might think that we are not embracing the most healthy lifestyle. So I may feel very compelled to change his mind on choices that we may be making together, especially as it

relates to exercise. And so because I love him so much because I feel like his conclusion about exercise does not uphold the healthy lifestyle that I believe he needs to be living. That makes me really motivated to want to try to change his mind. But listening respectfully and seeking understanding from the other and walking in the other person's shoes is really important to our ability to create the kind of signal communities that I think God wants us to create. And it also takes a lot of time for these type of genuine transformative conversations to take place. Everyone involved must be willing to invest time with each other. Everyone must be willing to suspend their desire to change the other person's mind and be really invested in trying to hear the perspective of the other. The skills required for this were really embedded in the listening circle process that the church engaged in gosh, more than a decade ago. Now I realized that for many, the listening circles sort of got developed in a negative connotation because of the topic that we were using them for in the life of the church when they were introduced. But that's kind of sad, because the material on listening circles and the process itself is really true and foundational to the kind of listening that we're talking about. And so the basic process is still really important for us to turn to. I listen to a person with a different perspective than I than my own, until I can adequately paraphrase that perspective. That's an important part of that deep kind of listening. And that's one of the skills that listening circles taught us. And not only do I have to be able to adequately paraphrase it, but the judge of my paraphrasing has to be the person who holds that perspective. So if you and I were listening to each other, I would need to be able to paraphrase your perspective until you're satisfied, and you would need to be able to paraphrase my perspective until I'm satisfied. Once we hear each other, we can explore deeper ways to understand why we each hold our particular perspective, perhaps going back to my husband. I need to be more intentional at listening to why he holds the perspective he does about exercise. But he also then needs to be able to listen more intensely to why I hold my perspective and through that process, perhaps then we can be open to a new way of understanding that may not be his way or my way. We may discover that there's yet another way that the spirit is trying to guide us with the benefit of understanding each other. That's really, I think, where we can be open to struggling together to what God is trying to say. I think our tendency to anticipate what other people are going to say and to try to prepare our next argument happens with God as well. I think that sometimes we try to project our own ideas and perspective into being God's perspective, as opposed to being willing to suspend and just be present with each other and with God.

Linda Booth

I agree that it also is with our relationship with God, you're absolutely right. And when we listen to open to understand, that could actually open us up to the possibility that we could be wrong. Definitely that we've held on to a belief or aside without challenging it ourselves. And we might also begin to wonder why we were so sure about something in the first place.

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, I think that is so true. And I wouldn't want anyone to think that Faithful Disagreement principles just lead us to a place where everyone just holds on to their perspective and is never open to change. And it's just how we sort of co exist at while we're each holding our different perspectives. Faithful Disagreement is about us being willing to respect each other but to

continue to journey with each other and especially with God. I think what I've learned in my both experience and some of my education is how meaningful conversations change us. There's no way to engage in a conversation with someone without leaving that conversation and somehow being changed. Now the change, maybe as simple as drawing us closer together in our relationship. But the change maybe a significant as causing us to question or recognize that our own perspectives need to be, um, open to that transformative spirit when we listen to God really intently. It also has a tendency to change us, since we have an Enduring Principle and a basic belief, like we've already said of Continued Revelation, We have to be open to the reality that God is constantly trying to work with us, that the spirit is always trying to guide us. And so we should not be surprised when we are challenged to change both our individual, but also our corporate understanding on something. You know God is gonna help us grow, and God is going to continue to form us into becoming the community that God needs the church to be. And that's why we have the six lenses for discovering God's will, because that kind of forces us into looking at questions, important questions, theological questions that we need to struggle together with from different perspectives. The six lenses also remind us that sometimes we get stuck in one way of seeing things maybe I might go to is to rely really heavily on science, and perhaps your go to is to rely really heavily on scripture and together we need to bring all of that in to our understanding and exploration. We also have to be aware that we make mistakes. And so that means that collectively, we have to be open to acknowledging those mistakes, to seeking forgiveness, to be repentant about those. And it means that in any point in time, when we make a decision, we have to do the best we can to embrace it, to live it out, but to be open to continued light and truth that may come forth.

Linda Booth

Yes, you, you've mentioned over and over again the importance of remaining open to the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Faithful Disagreement paper says, And I quote, through our vulnerability to the Holy Spirit, we trust God will continue to guide us in refining positions. And that's what you've been saying. Yeah, and we don't often think about being vulnerable to the Holy Spirit more, and we're in the midst of disagreeing. So, uh, spiritual practices must be key to all of this faithful disagreement.

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, I think that's really true. Perhaps it's when we are disagreeing that we need to be the most vulnerable to the Holy Spirit. You know, fights are not a pleasant thing, and I wouldn't suggest that that's the best way to have conversations. But open, respectful dialogue where different perspectives are upheld can lead to that feeling of discomfort about disagreement. But maybe it's in the midst of that discomfort that the Holy Spirit can break in. We have to be willing to lay down our need to be right on live into the opportunity of being righteous. By this. I mean, we have to stop trying to convince each other of who's right or wrong and joined together to discover God's will for moving forward. And in this spiritually, practices are critically important because they help us connect with God and go deeper in our relationship with God and with each other, and and one kind of spiritual practice in particular, which is called holy difference or sometimes spiritually. Freedom, I think, is really important when we're talking about decisions where there's a lot of different perspectives. Spiritual freedom means we give

up the answers we have or the answers we want to find and are free to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit that may confirm or contradict what we thought we knew. Of course, this is difficult because most of us are comfortable and secure in the rightness of the familiar worlds of thought, belief and reality that we have constructed. So it's really disruptive to let go of those and be open to God, wholly different, not wholly difference, holy indifference invites us to trust God, to see and be the truth and hold us beyond our own human perceptions. We have to be willing to offer God our limitations and biases and say not my will, creator, but yours and not my truth, God but yours, and that's could be scary. And you make us feel really vulnerable. We have to be willing to stand in that place of openness on emptiness, and that's where the word indifference comes. It doesn't mean that what we're trying to discern doesn't matter. That because I think sometimes, you know, indifference is used in a negative way to say, Well, it just doesn't matter. In fact, it's just the opposite of that. It's that it matters so much that we are willing to suspend our own agenda and ideas.

Linda Booth

Yes, that vulnerability to the Holy Spirit does open us up to that possibility, and the spiritual practices do help us to be vulnerable. There's also a vulnerability that we have with the person we're disagreeing with. So what different stays do you think, will being vulnerable to God and each other, making our relationships in our congregations and even in our communities?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, just actually thinking about that, Linda kind of gets me choked up because I think that it's not until we can truly be vulnerable with each other that we can fully become the people that God is wanting us and needing us to be being vulnerable to God and each other is, I think, at the heart of Christ like unconditional love, and I believe that love is the only thing that could bring about God's vision of Shalom. It also means that we stopped questioning each other's motives, and that's really hard, because when someone doesn't agree to me, agree with me, it's so much easier to say. Well, they just don't get it or they're just not as faithful or they're not as committed to making the world a better place like I want to see the world be,

Linda Booth

Or they're not Christian.

Stassi Cramm

Or they're not, yes. It is so easy to question each other's motives. And yet, when we are journeying together as a community, one of the key elements is that we have to start in this place of trust. We have to trust that we are all equally committed to the same mission and that we all want to see God's vision of Shalom come to fruition in the world and that our disagreements are us doing the really hard work off, asking the really difficult questions and being willing to struggle together to try to find those answers. It's this kind of conversations that we need to be able to have with each other because there's no way that I alone can go grasp what God's purposes are for the world. I think about my husband when I think about these kind of conversations because of all the people in the world, he of course, is the one that I have one of the deepest relationships with, and yet he and I do not agree on all matters of

faith, theology, politics, exercise or anything else, and yet I never question his motives because I know he wants to live a like long life, just like I want him to live a long life. And so it's those kind of relationships that create this opportunity for us really to struggle together when we are having different discussions and when we're talking about really important topics. I also think that when you start to see the world from another person's perspective, without questioning the person's motive or walking in their shoes, as you said, it draws you closer to that person, even if you don't change your own perspective. I suspect that many of my relationships are sometimes limited to what people might refer to as pseudo relationships. Just because developing deep, meaningful relationship takes time, um, and opens me up to being vulnerable. And so I confess that I sometimes maybe keep people at arm's length so that my life is not to disrupted by their life. But when we become vulnerable to God in each other, our lives do become woven together, and for me, this represents family at its very best. I realized that not all families have the blessing of that kind of connectedness, but I do think that that's the kind of connectedness that God wants inside of families, whether they're blood relationship or whether they're the kind of families that get created through Christ like love. When our commitment to each other and God is so deep that no particular decision, our topic will break us apart. That's the kind of space that we can enter into to have the kind of really important conversations that we need to have to really embody Christ's mission in the world.

Linda Booth

Yes, Stassi, I totally agree with what you're saying. Have you ever seen that lived out in congregational life? And if so, can you share that experience?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, absolutely. It's not like a congregation really decides, "Hey, today we're gonna use the Faithful Disagreement principles for having this conversation." So I guess I haven't really perhaps seen that. It's a lot more subtle than that, but I could give you some particular example. So let me just kind of check off a couple. First of all, I have participated in the processing of priesthood calls for people who were not supportive of the church's position regarding the ordination of women, and you might say, Well, gosh, how does that work, especially since I was a woman in the middle of processing that call? Well, that lifts up principle Number three. Our listeners will have to go look up because I'm not going to read all the principles. But it puts that principle into action and says that differing views do not impede the ability of a person to hold priesthood. I've also witnessed a mission center president help a pastor leadership team work through providing guidance to a member who had differing views in the church following the U. S. A. National Conference. And, um, and they were trying to help that person find appropriate places to share their opinions and their perspectives and why they held those so that they would understand that their perspective, you know, had value to the whole group, even though it was different from where the church was going. And if you were to look at the principles, I think that was principles 4, 5 and 6 taking shape and form. I've sat with a group who wanted to change a decision that was previously made by a Mission Center conference about their campgrounds, and they were faithfully disagreeing with the decision that was made on. They wanted to find constructive ways to discuss alternatives and reconsidering the decision, but they didn't want that to be derogatory or, you know, to be

really negative in the in the body. And I think that was principles 9 and 12 at work. I've watched administrators lovingly and force a policy that they did not personally support because they understood that that was their responsibility based on the position that they held. This that had to do actually with cohabitation and the holding of priesthood. And I think that was principle number 8 at work. I could go on and on as I'm sure you could. Um, the principles of a Faithful Disagreement are being used all around us, and sometimes we may not even consciously recognize them. In fact, I would say when we're being the kind of signal communities that God calls us to be, it's just happening naturally because that's part of what makes us a signal communities. But by having them written down and as a reference point for us, it can remind us when perhaps are the signal of our community, is not quite aligned with God's purposes or ours or our Zion expression needs a little refinement or a little updating.

Linda Booth

Yes. And if we really realistic, I mean, if you and I just think about it. And if our lister's think about it, we all know that there will be difficult and possibly divisive issues that the church will need to face in the future. So I don't know if you can do this or not, but I'm gonna ask you the question. Anyway, what are some of those issues that you think that the church and delegates to World Conference may need to discuss in a faithful way?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, I think that, um it goes without saying that there will be complex, potentially divisive issues in our future since we are not yet in Zion and God's vision of Shalom isn't repeated around the globe. I think that says we have a little work to do and living out Christ's mission, and it's always a little hard to guess where the Holy Spirit will lead us. But you and I have talked about non violence in our last podcast. We talked about World Conference resolution 1319 and I think that's definitely a topic that's unfolding before us right now that has a variety of perspectives worldwide and depending upon what statement or what position the church ultimately decides to embrace or take on non violence, I think that could be a complex and hopefully not a violent topic but certainly divisive. So I think faithful disagreement will guide us as we explore that we know that in parts of the world, conversations and questions are still bubbling about the church's policy that active priesthood members cannot be living together with their partner outside of marriage. So I would say that in some ways, that's already a somewhat contentious, maybe slightly divisive topic that's before us so defined a fate a way forward. We're gonna have to explore the nature of covenant relationships. We're gonna have to talk about the sacrament of marriage. Perhaps all of us are going to have to give up our preconceived notions on where this topic will lead us as we remain open and faithful to the leading of the Holy Spirit. And as we hear different perspectives, we're gonna have to all agree to remain faithful and to stay committed and struggling together because I wouldn't want to see any of those topics split us apart. And lastly, I'm mindful that as we continue to become amore, virtually connective world, that that will continue to challenge us in interpreting how the church's sacraments get lived out and bring blessing to this virtually connected world. I think you and Scott talked about that just ever so briefly in his last podcast, And I think people are gonna have really strong opinions cause the sacraments are so core to how we feel and, um, and how we experience God's presence with us. And so I hope that as we struggled

together with that, that no matter what happens, the desire to stay together is what will keep us moving forward and that our particular perspectives on a single topic will not pull us apart. I think God wants has continued to pull together.

Linda Booth

Yes, we're all needed on the journey aren't we?

Stassi Cramm

Yes we are.

Linda Booth

I know the first presidency has been using new tools developed by the Common Consent Team to help delegates at the last two or three conferences, to listen to different perspectives and to reach decisions in a way that goes beyond what can be done using Robert Rules of Order. Yeah, And while the 2022 World Conference seems a long time away, I know that the First Presidency is already prayerfully considering what issues are critical for the church to discuss in order to live Christ Mission. So how can we, the listeners and church members and friends of the church support you and the First Presidency in your preparations and also personally prepare for God's continuing guidance?

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, I really appreciate that question as your last podcast with President Veazey discussed, I think of the World Church Leadership Council. It's spending time in 2020 in a very intentional discernment process. Now we try to function as a continually discerning group as leadership council. But there are those moments in the life of the church when you want to really pause and make sure that as you are planning for the future that the Holy Spirit's guidance is being adequately reflected in what is unfolding. Our focus is making sure that we are responding faithfully to leadings of the Holy Spirit as it relates to Christ's Mission, while tending to the basic operations that need to be sustained, were seeking to understand what matters most in supporting the church in Living Christ Mission and also how to fund that as the church deals with economic and financial realities. So prayer support of the leadership is really vital to us! And I want to really, like, underscore and put an exclamation point after that. We're so grateful for the many prayers that people offer on our behalf, and at various times we'll get emails. I know we got an email from you recently when we were in a budget planning meeting that you were upholding us in prayer, and I just can't say how important knowing that is. At the same time, we want to make sure that the church knows that we're prayerfully upholding leaders and groups who are actively engaged in mission through their congregations and mission centers as they attempt to live out the mission initiatives. So it's really important to us to know that they are out there doing the same work. We know that as we are discerning faithful ways to provide leadership that keep us faithfully engaging mission as a worldwide church that local leaders are asking their own discernment questions about what mission looks like in the context where they live and serve. And that's really important that people don't simply wait for us. It all has to be happening at the same time. So as we try to lead in a continually discerning way, we're hopeful that others will feel empowered to lead in similar

ways. And lastly, I would ask, um, our listeners and people of the church to pay attention, paying attention to what is bubbling up through the leadings of the spirit in the congregation's admission centers, where they lead pay attention to what is coming forth from the church through all of the various places where the church is in conversation. Whether that's on the church's website, in social media, on podcasts, in the Herald or in all the various resource is that are being produced. It's only as we have conversations together as we read and study together as we listen to the Holy Spirit together that we can faithfully follow where God is leading us.

Linda Booth

Absolutely. And I've I've thought this conversation as we've been talking about how exciting really the future is and how much hope we really have because of God's involvement and our sense of call in this divine journey. And so this is my last question.

Stassi Cramm

Okay.

Linda Booth

What is your personal testimony about Faithful Disagreement and hope for disciples who live out their discipleship in Community of Christ?

Stassi Cramm

Ooh, that's a tough one. What's my personal testimony? Well, I would want to say that Faithful Disagreement is a biblically based idea. I think it's pretty clear from the stories in the New Testament that there was a lot of disagreement on and that people were trying to be very faithful as they tried to figure out what it meant to live the way of Jesus if we were to just look at Peter and Paul in particular, there are a lot of things that they did not agree agree on when it came to matters of church politi. And yet we know that without both Peter and Paul, we would not have the opportunity to follow in the way of Jesus like we do. They both made significant contributions, and they really picked up Jesus's mission where he left off. We know from our own history that it is often easier to splinter apart than pull together, and you named a particular example of that in the 1980's. I don't think it's easy to be a disciple of Christ as part of Community of Christ. We don't have a creed. We don't profess simple answers to life's perplexing questions. In fact, most of the times we have more questions than answers. And then, if that's not complicated enough, we have so much diversity in perspectives on most topics, I think it sometimes feels really overwhelming. And yet, if someone is looking for an easy answer, Ah, feel good journey of discipleship and spiritually formation, then Community of Christ is likely not the place for them, but for people who are willing to journey together, who are willing to live with those really complicated questions who are willing to sing hymns and offer prayers and read scriptures, sitting next to people who may have a very different way of expressing their faith or who might have a different perspective on a particular topic, then I think Community of Christ is a great place to be, because we are all committed to creating God's vision of Shalom, and sometimes I think our passion on different matters is expressed so intensely because we also badly want to create Zion. We want to create those kind of places where everyone has worth where there's a place at the table for everyone, and we feel

passionately about it. And faithful disagreement reminds us to cling together in the midst of those really intense conversations because it's the ultimate vision of Shalom that we're all after and that that's what matters most. And that's what's most important and that we can only get there together.

Linda Booth

Thank you, Stassi. And thanks to those who are listening to this episode of Coffee Buzz.

Stassi Cramm

Hey Linda, I get that you're ready, ready to sign off. So before we sign off, the presidency was meeting yesterday, and I was telling them that we were gonna be doing this podcast and we just wanted to take a moment to invite the coffee buzz. Listeners to email topics of interest for future Coffee Buzz episodes. So if any of our listeners or any of your listeners as our facilitator have ideas, we would invite them to email, and the email address is F p. So Frank Peter, those two initials at cofchrist.org so fp@cofchrist.org as we plan our future episodes with you, we'd like to know what buzz everyone is interested in hearing.

Linda Booth

And I do, too. So all of you, her listening please send in topics or ideas or comments that you would like a member of the Community of Christ First Presidency to have a conversation about or to make comments about. So watch for next month's eighth episode of Coffee Buzz with President Scott Murphy, who he is the other counsellor to Prophet President Steve Veazey.

Stassi Cramm

Yeah, you can tell him he's counselor number one. I love to tease him with that nickname.

Linda Booth

Counselor number one will be with us. Absolutely!

Linda Booth

Thanks, Linda!

Linda Booth

Thanks, listeners!

Josh Mangelson

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