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Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 0:17

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

Karin Peter 0:33

Welcome to Project Zion. I'm your host today Karin Peter and we are talking about justice today with Rick Sarre. Now, many of our Community of Christ listeners know that Rick is a member of that standing High Council for Community of Christ. The standing High Council meets at the request of the First Presidency and considers questions of moral and ethical significance as well as other areas of providing other areas of advice and counsel. Rick also chairs the Community of Christ's peace and justice team and pursue peace on earth is the primary focus for that team. And it includes looking at justice issues that are essential for pursuing peace, such as and now I'm quoting from the team website such as the ethics of peace, the challenges to peace posed by artificial intelligence and the threats to peace posed by climate change, loss of biodiversity, political instability, or education, disempowerment of women and girls, and poverty and poor health. In addition to that ministry, Rick is also a member of the earth stewardship team. So that's a lot of teams there, Rick, so welcome and thanks for being here projects I am

Rick Sarre 1:55

My pleasure.

Karin Peter 1:58

So in section one 164 for the Doctrine of Covenants, we have been counseled to expand the churches, restoring ministries, especially those devoted to asserting the worth of persons protecting the sacredness of creation and relieving physical and spiritual suffering and your service to the church. Through the peace and justice, Earth stewardship teams and the standing High Council seems to exemplify those areas of focus in ministry and those are all of those activities are simply part of your discipleship that's lived out in a volunteer capacity. So, in your professional life, you are dean of law and professor of law and criminal justice at the University of South Australia. Rick has multiple degrees both earned and honorary, as well as a long list of international citations, awards and recognitions my very favorite being the internet National Ambassador for the British society of criminology, for 2015 to 2017. So someday we're going to have a conversation about that, Rick, that sounds fascinating. So with all of that being said, as your introduction, is there anything else you would like to share with our listeners before we begin our conversation?

Rick Sarre 3:21

Only that it is rather remarkable now of course, with the power of communication that we can have this sort of communication right across the other side of the world here, Australia has actually been okay, or be very distant from the Independence area and has been a hotbed of

change over the years. Now I'm here in Adelaide, which is in the middle of Australia, but my my forebears in Sydney and Melbourne, particularly, if you go back to the 1970s and 1980s. were behind things like the creation of the peace and justice team. behind things like the ordination of women behind things like stewardship, in fact, it was in the 1990 World Conference in Australia and a resolution that that brought the earth stewardship team into into fruition. So, while I feel so distant, physically, not spiritually distant here in Australia, but yes, I love living in Australia, but I love visit the United States as well.

Karin Peter 4:25

Well, and that's where we met Rick and I sit near each other when we're at World Conference, and have been known to share chocolate back and forth, which was a great way to meet you. So we invited Rick to do an episode of project Zion podcast on the topic of justice and more specifically, how has our journey in Community of Christ informed or perhaps a better word is transformed our understanding of justice? Now you talked a little bit about the creation of teams that have a lot to do With justice in the world, but before we even go, go into exploring some of that, I'd like to first see if we can get a definition from you on justice to just kind of have a starting point for today.

Rick Sarre 5:15

Well, I have my own thinking around the issues of justice. And if I would sit down to distill it down to one thing, it would be questions of power, giving people the power to make their own lives and change. Most injustices arise when someone else is making decisions for that particular victim, that particular person, that particular citizen of a particular region or area. And I like to think that over the years, over the centuries, over the millennia, of course, we've looked at not just the slave movement, of course, he just couldn't make decisions for themselves but into the 20th century, and now the 21st century, the disempowered of women the disempowerment of indigenous First Nations people, the disempowerment of the young, the disempowerment of HIV AIDS, carriers, the disempowerment of LGBTQ persons. And justice is making sure that those people are heard, give a voice and given some power to change their circumstances, if you don't have that power in justices are more likely to occur.

Karin Peter 6:28

So when we talk about justice, we don't always talk about it, in connection with the life of the church, and I'm thinking about the definition you just gave, which was power, who has it who doesn't have it? One can employ one's power on behalf of someone else, but someone also can misuse power to diminish others. And so these issues of power, we don't always correspond when we're talking about Community of Christ and the religious body, looking at ourselves, we look outside of ourselves. So today I wanted to talk a little bit about about the church and our journey with justice. So let's start a little bit with the early church. When we look at the principles that we have for looking at the history of new Christ restoration, history and a broader perspective, and then our own journey with that, one of the principal states, a church with a mission focused on promoting communities of reconciliation, justice and peace should be self critical and honest about its history. It's important for us to confess when we have been less than what the gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to be. And that has opened the door for a lot of

study about our church history in a more thorough, more critical lens. And in our history, the restoration tradition. Our early leaders in members had a different perspective on justice, don't how you just described it and even a different person Divine Justice then how we see our call in the church today to be about peacemaking and justice making. So can you talk a little bit about the early church and kind of its hope for justice in light of some of the things that happened to the the early church people and then also justice from the other perspective, which is church member participation in Acts of injustice.

Rick Sarre 8:27

Let me go back to the the formation of the church and of course, this is a time in the 1830s and 1840s. When we have a rather than I use the term advisedly arrogance, a bunch of young men who, flaming the mainstream, they're actually kind of pushing the boundaries. In the same way of course, we can go back to the hospitals, that Christ was pushing boundaries with the Sanhedrin and others saying actually, as far as he was concerned, some of those Jewish rules and and practices were were not what he wanted to push So we have a situation where we now have in the 1830s 1840s, a bunch of men, that's telling people that God was directing them speaking personally to them through modern revelation, we now had a new testament of the of the Christ coming to the analysis, this is going to be very, very hard for people who are being told that their particular style of worship is no longer valid. The problem with that, of course, was the people that we know now as the restoration, whether they were the Brigham, it went west or stayed in Independence, and so people are walking justice, obviously, they've now been given marching orders from various places the the ranks have been decimated they've been told them to that, etc. So that would have been a very interesting way for our churches, Latter-day Saint movement to be born. That being the case, we then had to regroup boss in the 1860s. We did with Joseph Smith. I won't profess to be an historian but can actually determine whether or not someone or that particular feeling of injustice lead to any different way in which we are going to be doing things. What I can say, though, is sort of the 20th century we then had back in the 1930s. This, this whole business about supporting direct control and the idea that the church itself was going to be dictating. We didn't have that stage of our priesthood of all believers, the church was kind of telling us what we needed to believe, in a very Catholic way in a very Anglican way. And of course, that changed quite dramatically. If I can just finish this little diatribe of mine by going right on air, I just quickly went to our World Conference resolutions and search for the word justice. It first appeared in 1968, where there was actually a resolution more but it doesn't appear then until the 1980s. And since that time, the word justice has appeared back to love search engines. Justice has appeared in World Conference resolutions 34 times. So it really has been a Latter Day if I can use that term concept for the church to actually say this now is part of our being we might have been caught up with a whole range of other things for the 1940s 1950s 1960s. Moving out of the civil rights movement, and it just reminds me that I've just finished the book. I just happen to have a copy of it here. I wasn't actually going to show you this, but it actually is sitting here. It's called religion matters. Edited by a friend of mine at Adelaide University and myself. The subtitle says the contemporary relevance of religion. It's just been published. And there's a wonderful chapter in there from Bill Russell, my professor, instructor Grayson University back in the 1970s. And Bill writes about the civil rights movement in the Midwest in Iowa and in when he was living in Independence, Missouri

as part of the Harold house team and pushing the first presidency at the time in the 1960s, to get back from the First Presidency saying no, we're more here to talk about spiritual matters, not master politics. We have, I think dramatically moved in the 1980s 1990s and into 2000, particularly with the renaming of the church after 2000 2001 to taking stands which we would never have done in the 1950s and 1960s. And certainly not the 1930s. When that history, we had that supreme directional control debate. So we've come alive in that regard. It does leave some people behind if you're talking about the rights of women, if you're talking about the rights of gays, lesbians, but the fact of the matter is, we have grown enormously as a church as a justice of peace and a stewardship church which we would never have done, but for the activism of our of our of that membership in the 1980s.

Karin Peter 12:57

So I find that really fascinating. We didn't even have justice as something that we talked about until you said it showed up in 68. And then not again until 80. And I'm thinking that as in 68, church members who were advocates for justice issues, particularly civil rights issues, we're not yet in a position of leadership within the church and it took another decade or decade and a half for those people to then enter into leadership in what would have been districts and regions and steaks back then, in order to start submitting the kinds of resolutions you talked about your jurisdiction in Australia, submitting to the church,

Rick Sarre 13:50

Having the confidence to do so and having the confidence that the world church would entertain it, and not as often as the case rule matters out of order. So you We have tackled issues like abortion and like capital punishment, like the rights of LGBTQ persons, or the rights of women, the rights of indigenous persons. It has been quite a revelation for me. I've been going to world conferences since the 1970s. Quite a revelation to me to see the way in which these issues and only tackle the tackled serious but not always take for it would not be very often hived off and I don't mean that disparagingly to the subcommittee's of the church like the standing High Council, like yours. Committee like the peace and justice committee, like the theology formation for me, all those committees having a chance to dissect and report back to the conference rather than having those debates on the conference floor. It's an it's a great maturing of the church since the 1980s. What's that thing 40 years at the time that I've been most active in the church, so it's been very enlightening for me and spiritual life as well.

Karin Peter 15:02

It also seems to reflect the change that we've had from when we talk about life in the church today from the perspective, perspective of modernism. The 1950s and 60s are a good example of that when we just have an idea that we've, we've figured out how everything's going to work, and we've got the answers and everything's great to this postmodern world, that then, after 68 began to be our reality, where institutional religion started to decline. And now we are seeing the results of that. And spirituality began to replace institutional religion in a lot of people's lives and, and in regions. I live on the west coast of the United States and you would find preponderance of people here who would say that they are spiritual but not religious. And

yet peace and justice issues resonate with people in ways that religious dogma does not. Why do you think that is?

Rick Sarre 16:11

Let me come back before I do with that particular questions, your little discussion there about modernism post modernism. In some respects, now we're noticing a post post modernism. Mm hmm. The postmodern, of course, for your listeners would know was the idea that basically, all voices are valid. modernism, as you said, was all about saying it's pretty settled. It was the post war particularly meant Western view that everything was kind of set had industrialization, excuse me, people had settled ideas the church had settled down, there wasn't going to be any disruption. And all of a sudden, along came the 1960s 1970s right around the world, saying, post modernism, of course, was saying that we needed to explore those people left behind and allow them to have a voice. I won't go into the sociology of that but people are pushing back now and saying actually wouldn't be a bad idea. to actually have some fixed ideas to actually have some standards to have some post post modernism. So someone can't just stand up and say, Well, here's what I believe and pretend, particularly with Nazism and Neo Nazism, that all is valid. There are some things, there are some voices that simply are not valid. And I say that guardedly, of course, but I think part of the way in which the church is wrestling now is to explore the way in which there are some standards, there are some standards on global warming and climate change that we need to adhere to. There are some standards on indigenous persons and the rights of First Nations people. There are some standards on Victims of Crime standards and the way in which women are still men between the standards of work around the world. Those sorts of issues are very important. And I think that's part of the reason why there has been this uptake, admittedly, in our church, if not other churches have saying, Well, if we are going to have standards in relation to the earth stewardship in relation to peace and justice, what are those standards gonna look like? Where the church at the moment is picking up on the idea of saying that we actually do need to put some things down in writing at church resolutions that actually can formulate what it is that we do actually affirm and believe the last thing you want to do is have a church that doesn't know what it stands for. And in some respects, that's where our church is going at the moment. Picking up on your idea of spirituality, however, is a very, very good touchstone to say that people are actually thinking we still want to be connected. And indeed, that's where I think the connection then is, even if we don't go to church on Sunday mornings or any other time, we can say, I feel connected to the ones of creations. So I think that people who do express this view that their spirituality is important, do also want to have some touch done for them to be able to link their beliefs, their connections to other people who are feeling this Same way. And of course, some people, including myself, and I'm sure many others within the church can then link that solidly to the message of Christ, who in fact was iconoclastic, he was saying things need to change. He was saying that I am the Prince of Peace. He was saying that the woman of the world needed to be heard. He was saying that the blind man rather than being basically cast out, needed to be needed to be recognized as well. So it's it's an it's an easy leap to say spirituality, justice, the mission of Christ, the mission of the church, and that's the core lessons that I think our church does particularly well.

Karin Peter 19:43

When we link it in that way, we're talking about something very different than simple belief. We're talking about practice. There's a difference between believing in Jesus and what Jesus did or who Jesus was that's very different than practicing what we saw Jesus do. So when we connect spirituality when we connect that to this touchstone as to use your word of things that we believe in that have to do with justice and empowerment, then what does that look like within the church? What are some areas where we have managed to work our way through in the kind of polity that we have, and have done significant taken significant strides in areas of justice?

Rick Sarre 20:39

Well, I mean, if you go back through the World Conference resolutions, I'm thinking of World Conference resolutions that look at the rights of indigenous persons that railed against capital punishment. I mean, there's those sorts of little things, I suppose the big one that I did want to tackle the moment and one that we are still wrestling with. And that's this idea of What What does it mean to be the peace of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to be a peace church? Now we don't have the tradition of being like the Mennonites, and like the Quakers are being born out of out of history. In fact, we even had Joseph Smith at the time, who had a militia. And so they were very much part of that kind of firebrand army style of onward Christian soldiers as it were. So that's not part of our heritage. But it isn't an interesting question. And when we're wrestling with the moment about how we do that now, and do we go down the path of looking at reframing and reshaping the way in which we encourage people out of the military service? So we are wrestling with at the moment, I shouldn't make a point. And I'd like to remind viewers that in fact, during the First World War, a man called F Henry Edwards, in fact was a conscientious objector. He was actually jailed in Britain for failing to fight the First World War. He then went to United States, became a member of the church who had been a member of the church, I should say, and now in England, became a member of the First Presidency, in fact. So we actually do have this history of the church wrestling with the idea of actually conscientious objection. So we're now talking through those sorts of issues about how it is that a person may or may not exercise their faith within our tradition, and have something that supports the end of the fight against actually. So that's, that's one of the again, one of the more difficult questions for our church to wrestle with at the moment. So we recognize that we want to be a peace church. We want to be a church of of justice. In fact, we often say the mantra there is no peace without justice. One has to precede the second has to precede the first. You can't just say sorry. Everyone must be peaceful. Please, if you've got people who are feeling that they've been completely disempowered and left out of the picture, so in fact, we do have as our church seal, the, the lion and the lamb from the book of Isaiah, where the lion shall lie down with the lamb and a little boy will leave them but we still wrestling at the moment with what actually that means for a membership.

Karin Peter 23:23

So that's something that's in the conversation of the church. Currently, I wanted to to ask you, there are issues where we have stood for justice, for example, ordination of women, we we took a big step with that in the 1980s. However, we have not we have not taken this the next kind of step there that says to membership, if we truly believe in the equal rights of men and

women does We would also work towards equal rights for women in nations where that is not taking place and even in the United States where we still can't pass an Equal Rights Amendment for women. And so we do tend to within the church, make strides in some areas, but we stopped short of them saying, how do we now live that out in the other aspects of our life, beyond our, our faith community together? And I'm wondering, I'm wondering how you view that as a person that that kind of swims in the water of legality and justice and law and these things.

Rick Sarre 24:46

My view in relation to the women's movement was formed and framed, I should say, in the 1970s when I was living in the United States, it had never occurred to me until that particular time that women had any holding back in the church, other than to sing the hymns to make the flowers and look after the children. And all of a sudden that just broke free in the late 1970s, early 80s, when these revolutions emerged, and all of a sudden, the Equal Rights Amendment was a game being debated in the 1980s. And clearly the women's movement took on a whole new phase. I, again, I'm not a woman, so I don't have that particular perspective. But I have been very proud of the church and the way in which it has faced and did face that head on. And to the extent that our rules, as a church do not have any semblance of discrimination, and of course, living in Australia, where in fact, we do have all the Equal Opportunity legislation that anyone would ever wish for. Now, how that translates in practice, of course, is quite bizarre in so far as if you look at the average wage, women are still predominantly in the carrying industries rather than the captains of industries. So that will change. And if you look around the world the moment and look at the people who are I would have thought, leading the world in terms of moral philosophy. I like to think of Angela Merkel in Germany, I like to think of just the raw dirty newzealand. In fact, there was a petition going around a little earlier this year, suggesting that Australia join New Zealand, certainly in the Rada and as our Prime Minister. So in to that extent, I think, I think the church has a feather in its cap in so far as saying that it really did move a lot faster than other churches, because we still have many churches around the world still struggling with that. And it does, of course, give rise to the difficulties that we always experience in having an International Church. And again, I'm not an idiot. nationalist I can't speak authoritative Lee on this. But you'll have nations of the world that will have their flags unfilled at World Conference, who still struggle with the idea of having equal rights when we have nations around the world. In in circumstances, well, there are still laws against homosexuality, for example, African nations, Central American nations, etc. And in these nations, when we talk about these issues, or try and pass resolutions at World Conference, it creates enormous difficulty for the delegates from those nations to go back to their home nations and say, well our church just did a full run to be homosexual. So those sorts of issues are always with us. But I do say from sitting on the floor of the last 10 world conferences, I'm not sure how many I've been to in the last 40 years, but it would be certainly the last 10 the maturity with which those particular issues are being raised and debated. I think is made flawless.

Karin Peter 28:03

So for our listeners who aren't familiar with World Conference, we have a delegate conference. And people come from all over the world. And we have the ability to gain the floor as delegate and speak to any issue that's on the floor at the time. And even for some of our listeners, that seems outrageous in a way, because their experience has not been that so when we think more broadly, even about our practice of discussing justice, we try to do it in a more just way. So what are your thoughts on the way that we're beginning to build consensus around ideas as opposed to debating them with Robert's Rules of Order?

Rick Sarre 28:54

Your listeners might need a little bit of a tutorial on that as well, but let me just quickly summarize the way in which it's worked, and you will learn from your experience. And the last I'm thinking lists from a list where we have moved away from the idea of Robert's Rules, with motions, and we still have those, of course and the debate of the amendment, etc. But on some issues, or contentious issues where we don't want people to get upset, nothing wrong with being upset, of course, if, if it's challenging, something needs to be challenged. But the idea of things like involvement of the military, for example, in church membership, things like that, where they're a deeply held beliefs, by people who've served in the military, not just in the United States, or countries of the world and feel that they are there. Others stand up and say that somehow other that particular sense of mission for them has been devalued or shouldn't be devalued. So what we do now is often break from that traditional model of motion, a second amendment, etc. and have a broadly based discussion in relation to a particular issue. And I'm thinking of something like military service of church members and conscientious objection. And then we'll have a broader debate where people will feel free to contribute to that debate without feeling in some way that their contribution is devalued. And then will be asked to be polled. Do you have a strong view on this? Do you have a lesser strong view? Do you have an ambivalent view? Do you have a strong view against that and then we publish those results. Now it's a very useful little snapshot of the 2000 people who might be sitting there being polled at the time as to where the body as a whole is feeling they'd like to go. Very, very useful, as those matters, then typically are then sent off to a committee to report back to the next conference. I've found that to be very, very useful as I'm sure the First Presidency does as well.

Karin Peter 31:13

It takes away the whole winners and losers in a debate over something and instead, we can see together where we are as a body. When something gets sent to a committee, which happens and you serve on teams and committees, what happens then?

Rick Sarre 31:33

Well, the committee is then or the team is then charged with the responsibility of looking into the issues carrying a position paper. I like to tell my my teams that I don't want one of these 10, 12, 15 page position papers. I like something that you can reduce to a couple of pages. People don't read long treatises. Not a bad idea. If you've got a back Background papers somewhere but an executive summary is what we like to have. So whether we're talking about the Standing High Council, the stewardship committee or the the peace and justice committee, I can't

actually say right now what the standing High Council is looking at, but I can assure you, there are some issues that are there, that we are now tossing around. Now, perhaps I can tell you, the Standing High Council is now looking at issues around priesthood and what it means the priesthood, particularly given this broad consensus in many other countries around the world, if not in your country in my country, where cohabitation is becoming far more common. In fact, our family lived in Sweden more than a decade ago, and I'd say 70% of our friends there were in non marriage situations and families and just Why don't you get married? Why we're together and are family. So the whole idea of marriage, cohabitation? What are the standards coming back to that discussion we had earlier about postmodern post postmodern, postmodern view would say that if I want to live together with my girlfriend or my, my partner and have children, that's who can make that particular judgment. And we're saying, well, maybe maybe there are some standards within the church. And so at the moment, the Standing High Council is wrestling with this idea about whether the priesthood of our church needs to have certain standards in relation to how they will exhibit themselves to the world as a married couple or non married couple issues around for example, domestic violence, which is actually one of the resolutions that came to the last conference are issues that are being pushed into the peace and justice mode, for example. There are a lot of people who would say, well, these are issues within families that we need to work through in relation to their spirituality, we need to counsel we need to do X, Y and Z. Others are saying I'm sorry, we can't excuse this behavior anymore. Every situation now has to be reported to the police. Nobody's ending we know that once a person is arrested in government, the police that virtually will end that particular relationship and that marriage. So those sorts of tough issues, we've always talked about the sanctity of marriage. But we can also at the same breath, suggest in some way or other reject people who have been bonded with each other. Those sorts of issues come before the committee's at the moment conscientious objection is before the peace and justice committee. The nature of the way in which our military service needs to be recognized is before the peace and justice committee. And those committees will come back in future conferences with statements with the First Presidency typically, either shaping some legislation for the conference to consider or to have that particular report of that committee with its own legislation. So that's that's where we go. And that's where these committees there are about seven or eight committees, subcommittees within the church at the moment that are looking at issues such as I said before, theology formation, human rights, stewardship, etc. And those committees each report to each conference, and if legislation emerges from that, the First Presidency and put it up for debate at the conference.

Karin Peter 35:27

So I remembered what I was going to ask earlier, and it's still in the vein of how things function with the church and with World Conference. And that is that even how we have begun to do things more and more is that as resolutions come, they're coming from local jurisdictions and they come to the World Conference. And that is often how we change things even if the resolutions that come are against policy or rule out of order. For example, the issue of ordaining women came before the conference, how many times before it was, you know, finally dealt with? No, it was dealt with through inspired counsel or at that time we called revelation. But now when we begin to deal with difficult topics, and they come before the church, people

are surprised to find that that is not so much a top down way of making change in the church. So my question is, is that a sign of us becoming more focused on justice and even how we express our polity together? Is it in other words, is it more just to have these kinds of things come from the grassroots and then be considered or is it because it's a religious institution more just to have it come down?

Rick Sarre 36:55

Here is I mean, that's a debate that will be alive in any organization, whether it's a religious organization, my own organization, a university organization, how do you have the top down approach? Or do you have the the students and the staff being the ones who raise particular issues? or political organizations? Of course, we'll have that same that same wrestling. My own view is that clearly, a top down view never really works, unless it's been informed by the so called rank and file. Although Having said that, I'll tell you a little anecdote from my, from my time at Graceland when I was a student in Iowa, and I don't I don't say this with any degree of smugness, but in fact, I did an essay on women of the priesthood. This was 1978. So I'm probably six years ahead of myself here. And of course, it was a bit corny, but I then did a survey which I then circulated amongst probably 100 or 200 students that I just had to fill in the paper. And it was, you know, do you think, well it was it was loaded, I'll tell you it was loaded because I said, name, the five people that have been the most influential in your life. Everyone wrote my mother, my first grade teacher happened to be a woman, etc. And that, of course, I asked later, do you think that women should be in the priesthood? Now, the reason I mentioning this to you is that predominantly, I'd say 80 or 90% of the response that came back. And of course, typically, back in those days, 90% of the students at Graceland were in fact church members are the predominant view at the most. I'm not going to take any view on this until I hear from the top. Ah, that's interesting, isn't it? In those days there was a very strong impression that within a church, particularly a church that believes in revelatory experiences that you either you either committed yourself to that or you went out with some other mob, you know, go and join the Unitarians go and join the Quakers gonna do go and do your own thing, if you're going to be signed up in this particular organization, the revelatory experience is fundamental to our beginning and in fact, it still is fundamental today. That being the case, I was not surprised with that particular response. Having said that, I think there has been a shifting of the guard. The shifting of the guard typically came at the end of the Wallace B. Smith period, when he was handing over the reins to Grant McMurray. And we saw a considerable shift in the way in which those revelatory experiences were now being expressed. I haven't made a study of it, but it would be interesting to go back to the early 80s to see the way in which Wallace B Smith was expressing the revelatory experience. And by the time we then head back, McMurray's brilliant insights, it moved from being in the first person of God, to the, the person with the revelation. Speaking of that revelation. Now that would be a good little essay for someone in the seminary to talk about the way in which that was expressed. But that's being carried on by this, this, this current president, Steve Veazey, talks about a very personal experience that he has these other words of wisdom that he's prepared to bring to the church. No longer do we have that style, which was a thought of course at its height, back in the 1840s, when just simply saying, I the Lord. Now, saying these particular words and my scribe here on earth, he's just got his pen out, and he's just kind of writing them down as I

dictate them to him. So to a large degree, We have already moved to that style of revelatory experience to say that God the voice of, of God, and now the president himself, and hopefully one day herself, will be the same way with revelation. I think the last two revelatory experiences where the president prophet has put those out of the church for discussion. And then say, by the time we actually have this, come back through the various quorums, which will include the quorum of 70, of the quorums of 70. Through the standing High Council, I can now confirm and affirm that the sorts of revelatory experience that I have, and had can now be brought to the church and form part of the Doctrine and Covenants. Now, that's a message Due to the way in which the rank and file the people themselves can feel very much a part of that regulatory process.

Karin Peter 42:07

Yeah, that's that's an excellent illustration of how far we've come in, in how we are together. So, we're getting towards the close of our time, I did want to ask you one more thing, because you are on the earth stewardship team. And because so many of the World Conference resolutions that have come before the church in regard to Earth stewardship have come from Australia. Our current president, President vz, has brought a lot of inspired counsel to the church, about the environment, and about justice for the environment. Where do you see that going? You know,

Rick Sarre 42:51

I'm glad you raised that point. Because there's so much crossover with these committees. Now. They're not separate islands. If you're talking about Human Rights, stewardship, peace and justice, we kind of put them in those frameworks. But of course, they all morph together, we have something like 60 million people around the globe at the moment who are officially classified as refugees, or people who have been left outside of their country, or hoping to move from their country, by virtue of a whole range of issues, typically political, or war or whatever. We're going to recognize and the stewardship committee and team has recognized that that will have or the fact of global warming and rising sea levels and the fact that we'll be having areas that will be rendered arid, etc, is going to give rise in the next 50 years, to massive shifts of people around the globe. And we can't be in a position where the world just shuts its borders. What happens as a result of those Earth stewardship issues is that human rights suddenly get thrown asunder. People get angry because they've not been heard and are living in poverty, suddenly become angry, suddenly become violent. And you now have a peace and justice issue. So interlinking of that is what the President is currently trying to do to say that what, what call is there on the church to ensure that we're on the forefront, as W Wallace Smith said way back in 1978. When we were first flagging this as being a role for the church, there'd be a lot of people in a lot of churches around the world who would say that's nothing to do with church. That's something to do with a state. Let's just pray. Let's just make sure that things are going to be settled in their own lives, their own spirituality, etc. I don't think that our churches, certainly not the last 40 years, ever maintained that. The church has taken strong stance on things and will continue to do so and with very good reason, we can't stand aloof from the fact that there are going to be a lot of people in the next generation who are going to be left behind. And at that stage, we need to make sure that their issues, their concerns, their

poverty, their refugee status, their, their being victims of human rights breaches need to be addressed by the church. And how we do that is a challenge for every small organization. But we have to in some respect, and here's another point I can make link with those organizations around the world who are doing exactly those sorts of things. So refugee councils, the anti poverty councils, the peace and justice councils around the world, the Mennonites, for example, trying desperately to ensure that people do exhibit peaceful ways of resolving conflict. And then other nations, for example, trying desperately to ensure that people who are alienated from their countries can be resettled in ways that didn't flagrantly fly in the face of human rights. Now, this is not an easy question. And of course, I'm rather proud of the fact that at church is taking this on in the full flight, our church is recognizing this. In fact, it has recognized this, and I should remind your listeners that we've had something like 25 Peace Colloquies over the last 30 or so years, and every one of those recipients, typically outside of our church has been drawn into our church because of their special skill in relation to peace and justice issues, whether it has to do with human rights, or stewardship, etc. That being the case we have very clearly been drawing down from the expertise of people outside of our tradition. You imagine going back to the 1840s, 1850s, even 1860s, suggesting that our church would ever need to have the experience and the expertise of people outside our particular faith in order to solve those particular issues, we mature greatly in recognizing that we're just one piece of a very, very large jigsaw.

Karin Peter 47:08

And learning to take our place in joining together, as you said, with other agencies, other denominations other people seeking to do good. Well, Rick, I've really appreciated this conversation. You, you've taken a term that we hear, and that we read, and it is a term we talk about peacemaking, we talk about peace and justice, but you have both broadened it and brought it into the forefront of not just what it means but ways in which we can begin to engage ourselves in issues of bringing about justice, where we are in the tradition of who we are as a people. So I want to thank you for that. Are there any last comments you want to share with our listeners.

Rick Sarre 48:03

Well the last comment I would make, and I, I'm always fortified, always fortified If ever I have a doubt, I have a lot of debt. I think most of our lives as people are involved in a, you know, faith movement is essentially dealing with doubt. I simply go back to that wonderful phrase of the person who wrote Galatians, the Galatians later when it was all it doesn't matter, that beautiful phrase that says there's neither Jew nor Gentile, slave, slave nor free, male or female, all one in Christ. And that is at the root of everything. That the forefront of their minds, the rest of it sort of falls into place, not easily, and that's the reason that we wrestle with these things. This is not an easy task, but it's one if we are fortified with that particular scripture, we can go forward with faith.

Karin Peter 49:00

Thank you, Rick. And this has been Rick Sarre visiting with us here Project Zion. On the topic of justice, if you would like to know more about the Community of Christ, peace and justice team

or the earth stewardship team, or even the standing High Council, if you'd like to explore what that is and what they do, you can find that information on the Community of Christ website at cofchrist.org. And if you'd like to read Rick's extensive resume, you can google him. That's your go to source for all information. Or you can I'm sure contact him through the Community of Christ website. So here at Project Zion, we're very appreciative of the time that he has spent with us today and having this conversation. And so again, thank you, Rick, and to our listeners. Thank you so much for being with us. I'm Karin Peter. Thanks for listening.

Josh Mangelson 50:07

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