

280 | What's Brewing | New Expressions
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.

Carla Long 0:33

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host Carla Long. And today I'm joined by a good friend of mine. Actually, I've known him for a long, long time. Well, actually, uh, John, I think I've known you for quite some time. And he's gonna be, he's a senior president of 70 with Community of Christ. His name is John Wight, and he's going to be talking to us about new expressions and if you've never heard that term, before, you're totally in luck, because after the podcast today, you're going to be experts on it. John, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast.

John Wight 1:07

Well, thank you for having me. Looking forward to this.

Carla Long 1:10

Oh, good. Well, tell us a little bit about yourself, John, before we jump into it.

John Wight 1:14

Well, you already mentioned that I'm senior president of 70. I also have a field assignment, I serve as the president of record for the third quorum of 70, which covers all the 70s in the United States. And then I have in addition to that, things like the new expressions project that we are working on, and a few other things like that, that keep me pretty busy.

Carla Long 1:43

Yeah, yeah, you I think you stay pretty busy. I saw that you did a little bit of traveling last year, and I gotta tell ya, I was a little jealous about that. Isn't it sometimes it's not a bad gig, right, John?

John Wight 1:54

That's right. It has its perks.

Carla Long 1:57

It has its perks. That's right. Well, so let's jump into it. Can you give us a definition of new a new expression? What does that mean?

John Wight 2:07

Yeah, I wish I had a simple definition for you. But that really would be counterproductive to the intent of new expressions. In a book called Beyond Resistance, John Dorhauer points out that we through history have moved through different iterations of the church, church 1.0, which

would be the Papal church church 2.0, which would be the Protestant church. And he points out that as sociology has been changing, that we now need to be looking at what he calls church 3.0. And what he means by that is something that's different than what we are accustomed to. When we say the word church. The point of new expressions is that there are ways to do the mission of Jesus Christ. At times other than Sunday morning, in places other than within a church building, and so new expressions is far reaching. So there isn't really a simple definition. It's anything that's different, that helps to communicate and live out the mission of Jesus Christ. That helps us to spread the joy, hope, love and peace of Jesus Christ out into the world. Different people, when they hear the term new expressions, think of different ways to do that. And so even using the term new expressions may mean one thing for one person and something different for another person. But we've just used that term to represent anything that's different than the norm for being church. In some cases, an existing congregation may remember itself into something that doesn't look like what they've been doing. In other cases, it may be groups or individuals that are doing things totally outside the walls of the church. Totally different than what we're accustomed to when we think of church. Really, the best way to define it probably would be to say, no holds barred whatever works, to experiment with things to be open to the leadings of the Spirit, or ways to indeed pursue the mission of Jesus Christ. Thomas Edison is quoted as saying that he didn't fail. He found 2000 ways not to make a light bulb. And so that's kind of what we are encouraging is to be open to the spirit and try things. Try being the church differently, because it will not represent failure. It will represent a learning experience. So that We can be better at doing the mission of Jesus Christ.

Carla Long 5:05

I love that so much I, we've been calling it so we here in Salt Lake and other places we've been calling it throwing spaghetti at the wall. And, you know, like seeing what sticks since like in, in some ways that kind of takes the pressure off. You know, it's like we're just giving this a try. We're seeing how people feel about it. We're seeing how we feel about it. We're seeing if it makes sense initially. And if it sticks awesome. If it doesn't, oh, well, we can move on. So in some ways, this feels very freeing.

John Wight 5:36

Yeah, it's it should be that's what we hope. Let me let me read a quote from the Dorhauer book that I referenced a minute ago, because I think this is a really important point when we're talking about new expressions. He he quotes a lady by the name of Phyllis Tickle in this paragraph. I heard Phyllis Tickle answer this very question. What she said made my heart sing it resonated very deeply with what I have been arguing for years. When asked what the foundation of this new way of being church might be, she confessed she didn't know. But if forced to answer, she would guess, the Holy Spirit. And that's really what this is all about is listening to the Spirit and trying those things, throwing that spaghetti against the wall.

Carla Long 6:25

I think that that is so important. And I really hope that people when they hear you talk about and other people talk about new expressions that they are given. If they need it, given the

permission, and I'm using air quotes, they're giving the permission to just try something different and try something new. Church doesn't have to be Sunday morning at 11 o'clock and it doesn't have to have a three hymns in it and one sermon and all that stuff church can be can look like so so much more. And I love that we're talking about that.

John Wight 6:56

Yeah, amen.

Carla Long 6:58

So what is your role relative to this new expression and new expressions and Community of Christ.

John Wight 7:04

Yeah, a year and a half or so ago, the US apostles tasked me with collecting information on new expressions that are being done. And so I've been doing that we'll say more about that in a minute. I've also been tasked with promoting the idea of encouraging people to experiment and try new things. And then I do some workshops. But again, that's a little, little tough to do, because there's not a one size fits all way of doing new expressions. And so, when we do workshops, it's more about philosophy, things to try and so forth. So that's my primary role in this is to gather information, promote it, and then do workshops as possible. Some examples of the things that I have been collecting, if I can share a few of those are contained in an electronic booklet, I'm calling it that, for lack of a better term. That's simply called New Expressions. And this, this is in response to Section 165:1f of the Doctrine and Covenants, which says, a collection of this is a collection of quote, additional innovative approaches to coordinating congregational life and supporting groups of disciples and seekers in the changing world. And so, in this booklet, we have compiled a number of things. We have have one section that is on new expressions which have been implemented, and I'll say more about that in a minute. We have another section that says detailed information about the above named expressions and so there's a listing of new expressions and then a way to click on a link and go and see the details about those new expressions. Then there's a section on ideas or philosophies for new expressions, some of which haven't even been tried. It's just ideas that people wish they could try or that they encourage people to think about as they think about pursuing new expressions. And then the last section is just a collection of suggested reading related to new expressions. There's a lot of good good material out there that can help us as we pursue this new way of being the church. Let me share, like I said, just a few of the examples that are included in here. I don't have time to go into the detail part of these but just to kind of provide some ideas of what we have collected thus far. There's one called arts and faith convergence. This is a combination church and Art Center, bringing artists who do not normally attend a traditional service together to work on artistic projects. Another one is there, there are a couple of them going one at Blue Water camp grounds in Michigan, and the other at Guthrie Grove campgrounds up in Iowa. And these are two congregations that meet at those campgrounds. The philosophy behind that was that many people who have kind of drifted away from the church, remember wonderful times at camps, that family camps on those camp grounds. And so the organizer said, why don't we start doing a quarterly retreat and invite all of those people

who have ever attended anything at the campground, a lot of people have very good memories, very deep spiritual memories from those campground experiences. And those have been very, very successful. So that's another Just another new way of being the church. Another one is called community organizing for social justice. This is being done up in the Michigan mission center. And it's where the Community of Christ is engaged in faith based community organizing for social justice, in partnership with action of Greater Lansing, and its member congregations, and organizations. And so partnerships is one of the things that I really heavily promote, so that we can put our minds and our efforts and our resources together to further pursue the mission of Jesus Christ. One of my favorite names of a new expression is called Geek Evangelism.

Carla Long 11:47

I was hoping you would talk about that one. That's awesome. Sorry, keep going.

John Wight 11:50

Yeah. This is a ministry that provides free computer repair and opportunities and it provides opportunities to invite people to Christ, and so it started out as as kind of a call to a young man to, to do something to help others. And that's what happened. He went and helped some people who were not particularly adept at computering and found that it opened the doors for relationship building and sharing testimonies and so forth. And so it has grown quite a bit through the year since they started. There's another one called helping hands. This is a twice monthly clothing giveaway. And after quote unquote shopping, people are invited into the fellowship hall for coffee juice and a pastry. And during this time, the sanctuary is open as a place to rest and pray while soft music is played. So it's not a big organized worship service. There's no expectation of those People who are in need have to come in there for anything so that they can get the clothing. It's just open and available for people who may feel the need for some quiet time a place to rest, maybe prayer. Another one is called Hot Dog Wednesday. And this is a weekly community gathering that offers free hotdogs, chips, drinks and apples. Usually they have a craft or an activity for the youth. And live music is also performed on on a lot of the Wednesday evenings when this is held. I have to say this has really made that particular congregation well known in the in the community. Sometimes we hear the question asked if this church disappeared when anybody noticed. Well, I can tell you in this case, it would be noticed because they have made so many wonderful relationships as they reached out into that community. Another one that I think is really really good is the Interfaith Hospital Network on a rotating basis. congregations host homeless families, for a week at a time. And this is again a partnership situation where they see the need and reach out and provide shelter for the homeless family for a week at a time. There. There's another one that I can't really give you a name for. This is one of those that's that's got a few happening around the country. What it is, is it's car repairs for people in need people who can't afford to get their cars repaired to get an oil change. So there are single mothers, other people in need. There are groups of retired mechanics that have gotten together in various locations, to do oil changes and these repairs kind of out there meeting the needs of the people, kind of like Jesus did. Seeing the need and trying to address the need. Another one, which I think is very interesting is called the Listening Table. And the purpose of this ministry is to simply listen to the visitors who come to the table

and build relationships for the future. There's no heavy sales pitch. They just provide people an opportunity to come and sit at the table and share concerns, share their thoughts, share joys, sorrows, whatever it might be and develop relationships sitting around that table. Another one is called New Life Outside the Walls. And this is a nonprofit community development organization, which was formed by a group to address needs in the neighborhood surrounding their congregation. The ministry launched a cafe, a bike repair and coffee shop, even a 16 unit apartment building. The storefront that has been converted into the living room, which is a gathering space for health clinics and civic meetings. Again, that image of partnering by working with different groups, they're able to bring ministry to the people who might need a particular kind of ministry. One of my favorites, and we could probably take the full time of this podcast, but just for this one, but one of my favorites is called the Oakland Peace Center. This is a ministry that was started by a congregation out in Oakland, California, which had dwindled to about six active members.

That congregation decided that they just couldn't afford to keep this beautiful Cathedral that they have going it was just costing too much. And so they they began to think about it and to pray about it. And what happened was it evolved into a partnership for the community that pursues peace initiatives. There are now about 42 nonprofit organizations. 12, who actually rent space from this congregation. And so they, they have this wonderful coalition of people working seven days a week to pursue peace on earth, for the earth for people. And it's just a great example of what can happen when we when we put our minds together and intentionally tried to discern what the Holy Spirit may be calling us to. Now those six members can still meet on Sunday morning and do their their regular thing because now they have people paying rent to help cover the costs of that facility. I might note that the rent is considerably cheaper than the market price for space out there in Oakland. But it's a great thing to read about how these groups who have a shared vision are able to work together because of the vision of this group out there. Another one, and this is actually included in John Dorhauer's book. It's called Reimagine. This is a faith based nonprofit organization built to explore how the details of Jesus's life can be made manifest in daily living. These faithful expert explorations are intended to inform things even like how we eat, how we enter into relationships, as a whole person, how we engage our sexual selves in relationship, how we relate to money, etc, etc, etc. And it's just a very interesting way of being church called Reimagine. Another one is called second Wednesday celebration. This is another one that I just love. That's a worship experience for people with or without disabilities, and the people with disabilities are in charge of the program, whatever that might look like on the second Wednesday of each month, it is up to the folks that do have disabilities of one kind or another, to prepare that and then to facilitate it.

Another one from Dorhauer's book is called the Emergent Desert. This is a home based ministry, reaching out to individuals whose spirits have been battered and abused by the condemnation that they have experienced in some traditional churches. And so again, it's just a different way to reach people who have felt that they have been abused in one way or another by traditional church. There's more about it in beyond resistance, so I won't keep going there. Another one from door ours book is called The Mount and this is a bunch of young people who want to engage in mission, but they don't have the will desire or capacity to tithe. So this is

supported by a traditional congregation. And the mount focuses on postmodern approaches to worship and promotes an expectation that participants will go and take some kind of action as a result of their experience together. So this is this is not getting together is not the end, it's the beginning to go and do the mission of Jesus Christ out among the people. And then when they get back together again, they report on the action that they took whatever that specific thing was that they did since the last time they work together. Another one that's kind of interesting is called The Spread. And this is a monthly meal started by young adults to promote healthy eating and cross community fellowship. You know, what, what better thing to do than break bread together, you know? There's another one that's called The Worth of All this group focuses on creating awareness and taking action to address issues of injustice. Again, taking the principles of Jesus Christ and putting them into action. There's one down in Wichita, Kansas, that's called The Light. There sign says the light and then it says Dry Bar and Grill. I love that. it caters to people who, who have had problems with alcohol. It provides a place for them to come and share in community fellowship sitting around the table again, breaking bread together, but without the the possibility of re-engaging in behaviors that had caused them so many problems. They want that community, that spirit of community they want those relationships, but rather than having to go someplace where they may feel feel tempted to re-engage in behaviors that have been destructive in the past, they can come to The Light and sit around the tables, have a sandwich, sharing good fellowship and develop those relationships with those people. Now, that's just one part of this ministry. They They also provide housing and some support for ex offenders. And they, they started with females and the last I heard is they were expanding. They had been offered a building to use with male ex offenders. And so there's that part of this program as well. Now they do have a time which we might think of as traditional church, although when I was there, I would not call it traditional church. But they do have a time when they get together and they sing together and they pray together and they talk together about principles that Jesus upheld and So this is a, it's a, it's a wonderful program. I wish I could spend more time with them.

Well, that was a long list of a few of the long list of examples that are included in the New Expressions Collection. This collection will never be finished it is a work in progress and always will be. And that's one reason that it is only in electronic format, because we are adding new expressions almost weekly to the to the collection. And that's one of the beauties, we hear about a new one, and then we have an opportunity to to add it to the to the list. There are a wide variety of other ministries that that I could mention. Probably one genre that I should mention in there is a section of the new collections book that addresses this. We really don't have time to go into much detail, but there are wonderful things that are going going on with online ministries that literally are reaching around the globe in ways that we would maybe have never imagined just a few years ago. And of course, the church has implemented a new policy that even allows for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to be shared in online gatherings. So there are lots of opportunities that are developing as new expressions by using the technology that is available to us. And again, just too numerous to go into the detail about those but there are a list of those in the new expressions booklet.

I love that you went through and talked about a few of the things that are in the booklet just because it makes it more real and more tangible. And even I who, whose I've looked at the new expressions, but even I, you know, am caught by that imagination of what other people have and how much fun it sounds to have hot dog Wednesday or geek evangelism or I mean, I'm not a car person. But what an incredible ministry to offer to someone to help them fix their car. oil changes are not cheap, and not easy if you don't have the knowledge and how are you going to get that done? Otherwise, I just, I just feel like these ministries. When we hear about what they are, they don't seem like something that's super far away that we could never do. They seem like something that's manageable and doable.

John Wight 25:28

Yep. So since you since you mentioned Geek Evangelism again, I have to just name one more that that I think you probably have heard of, I figure you probably enjoy it. And it is one of those online ministries that they're doing out in the Mid Atlantic Mission Center. It's called Church Nerds Unite. I love that title. Yes, they get together online and just talk about a variety of subjects.

Carla Long 25:56

So oh, well, we have plenty of church nerds out here in Salt Lake and I bet sounds like a really good idea to me. So I, there's a lot of questions I have for you. But one thing I definitely want to get to is why, in your opinion, do you think it's important for people to explore new expressions because I can see that it would be so so good for congregations just to do this as well as the people who come in and that and the ministry for new people and all that stuff. But I can see a majority of the of the help going to the congregation and the congregation being energized by it. But why do you think it's important for us to explore it?

John Wight 26:41

Did you say we have about three, three and a half hours for this discussion?

Carla Long 26:45

At least I'm sure everybody on the podcast like of course.

John Wight 26:49

Just kidding. But I this is this is an area that I really feel very strongly about, and it's based on an old old scripture. It's part of the letter to the Corinthians that the apostle Paul wrote. And in that he he said, when I was with the Jews, I became like a Jew when I was with the Gentiles, I became like a Gentile, I have become all things to all people that by all means, I might save some. And so for me, that's the foundation for why I am so excited about new expressions. Paul recognize that the same message trying to give the same message in the same way to different people wasn't going to work. And so he said, when I was among the Jews, I learned how to communicate with Jews. When I was among the Gentiles, I learned the ways to to address their needs and to communicate with them. I have become all things to all people that by all means and so that's that's really the the bottom line for me is we need to look for all means possible to share the gun. gospel of Jesus Christ to get that message of joy, hope, love and peace out there.

But beyond that, there, there are some things that that I think need to be lifted up from a practical standpoint. And this is what John Doerr's book goes into there. There are a couple of other books that I'll well, I'll mention those later. But John Dorhauer and when he talks about church 3.0, from a sociological perspective, he's saying things are changing. We're living in a different age now. And some of the things that he points out is the fact that we have shifted into post modernism largely. And he points out that that is not an age related thing. He said, you can have an 18 year old modern thinker and a 98 year old postmodern thinkers. So it's just that we've seen this major shift sociologically into a postmodern way of thinking of course, in that there are things like the fact that people don't see any universal truths. And so trying to promote one right way of thinking just doesn't work in this day and age with an awful lot of people. That also has resulted that the postmodern shift has also resulted in a kind of a basic lack of trust in institutions across the board, but particularly church institutions. And I started to mention a minute ago that there are a couple of other books that I want to share the titles of, and this is a good time for me to mention one of those. There's one called church refugees by Josh Picard and Ashley Hope. And in this one, they talked about the fact that there are a lot of people who are just done with the institutional church. They still have deep faith in God deep faith in Jesus Christ, but they're just done with the institutional aspect. And so I feel called to look for ways to connect with people who have lost a connection that they're just done with an institutional church and find ways just like Paul said, by all means to connect with those people, so that they can feel in a in a different way and a new expression, if you will, the ways that, that they can be blessed the ways that their lives can be touched because of their faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

And as I said that they refer to these folks as the DUNS sometimes we hear the the expression, the nones, and n o n e s. And and so these authors refer to these church refugees as the Dunn's. They're just done with institutional church. And of course, that has resulted for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the shift to post modernism but even things like the scandals in various groups have contributed to that lack of trust in institutions. We've also heard the expression no doubt. Well, I'm spiritual but not religious. So you know, that's a major shift for us. The nones and n-o-n-e-s again in 2019, they became the highest single group in in a study that was done to see how many people identified with with Catholicism with Protestantism, etc. They took over and are now like one or two points, percentage points higher than any of the other groups. They just they have, they don't identify with any religious institution. There's another aspect that comes into this the sociological shift for us. And again, one of the main reasons that I feel compelled to promote new expressions and And as you said before, to give permission and encouragement for people to try some new ways of being church and and that is the there is an age. You know, the post modernism is not age like John Doerr, our points out, but the millennials, that is a different that is an age group that is has become hard to reach. There's an article by Sam Eaton that I really encourage people to read. It's very, very helpful. It's called 59% of millennials raised in the church have dropped out, and they're trying to tell us why. So again, they want to be involved, but they don't feel that they can be they don't feel welcome. And so that's another of those sociological shifts, that that really in my thinking makes it imperative that we look for new ways so that we can reach those people as well. Again, the name of the article is 59% of millennials raised in the church have dropped out. And

they're trying to tell us why buy Sam eat. He did research with a number of millennials and asked questions. This article is about eight pages long. And he rather than trying to convince them of anything, he said, What would you do differently? how can how can we do things differently? In other words, new expressions that you would feel comfortable with. So he went out and talk to people, some of those in this 59% that have been raised in the church, but have dropped out, again, to just reprise Paul to become all things to all people. That by all means, that we need to do that. Now. Let me clarify, I do not believe that Paul was saying we have to be all things to all people all the time. Notice he began by saying when I was with the Jews, I became like a Jew. When I was with the Gentiles. I became like a Gentile and so it's a matter of Looking at the possibilities before us, and then figuring out how we can connect with those folks, how we can develop relationships with those folks that allow us to, to be together to work together to improve the world together. We have to find those ways to communicate that message. And again, to give people permission to experiment. I also think it's important for us to use all the tools that we have available to us to do what Paul wrote about. For example, I promote the use of demographics so that people can learn more about the area where they are located. Sometimes we make assumptions and boy, I've been guilty of that. More times than I would care to admit where I thought I knew a community and then I checked the demographics and fine Oh, no, man, you were dead wrong. And so we have available through the church free of charge to individuals and congregations and mission centers, a demographic service called percept. That provides information about a given area. And we can we can design the coverage area for the reports in a number of ways just to help people get acquainted with what's out there. Let me give you a quick example of how this provided for a or allowed for encouraged a new expression. I was working with a congregation. And the pastor said, Could you sit down and go through the percept report with me I'm having a little trouble gleaning from it. What we should probably be gleaning and so we sat down together and I looked at the line that said number of people who have dropped out of high school, and it was huge. It was it was way above the national average. It was something like 66% were high school dropouts. And I pointed to that, and said, What do you think about that? And she thought for a minute, and I saw the light go on in her mind, and she said, Oh, GED classes. And so that congregation went to the school district and said, we understand there's a problem with high school dropouts in this area. Is there something that we as a congregation could do to help with that? And the district was just thrilled and said, yes, if you could start GED classes, we will provide the teacher if you can provide the space and so forth. And they did that. And so suddenly, there was a new expression of the mission of Jesus Christ taking place in that location. And had we not had access to those demographics, we probably never would have known that. And so like I said, I'm a real proponent for using the tools that we have at hand, such as demographics. Now, I also do not think that's all that we need. And so I promote doing something we call a community survey. Going to buy two and knocking on doors and asking people's opinions not selling anything, not pushing anything. Just saying we would like to know what you think, are the biggest problems in this neighborhood? What are the biggest needs? And there are a total of six questions that help us to get information so that we like Paul can know how we can better relate to those people. And so I do promote that as well. This is actually a three prong approach that I promote the third prong I've already named it, but that is intentional discernment. I don't think we can use just demographics. I don't think we can just use

community surveying. I think we have to invite the Holy Spirit very intentionally, into the whole process so that we're getting good information, but also opening up in some very intentional ways to let the Holy Spirit lead us into these new expression possibilities. Now Those are, those are not the only resources available to us. Those are just three that I have found very helpful. There are a number of other resources that we can use in this whole process. One that many who are listening may be familiar with is called meetup.com. And it's just a way to make connection with people who have similar interests, then then they can join together and share together based on that mutual interest and relationships can be built opportunities for sharing can can happen. Social media, obviously, is another tool that we can use to reach out to people and see where that might take us. Is there a new expression that might develop as we do that? There is a resource that's available through the church's website now that can be used in house churches. It's it's worship helps, but they're scaled back. They're there. Not high church. And so those are available, another tool that can be available for people to use so that if they feel led to open their homes and invite people into their homes, they don't have to start from scratch, they can go in and use some of those materials and have a very informal worship experience, right in their own homes. Well, as I said, we could keep going for three hours talking about all of this, I could just keep going etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Because there are a number of tools that are available to us, as we look for opportunities to begin new expressions of ministry, new expressions of being church, out in, in our culture, in our neighborhoods, in our homes, wherever it might be. So, don't take what I have said as the end all and the cure all and it's those are just examples of of things that that we can pursue.

Carla Long 40:03

Well, one thing that I have found in congregations and you've mentioned this a couple times is that when we become so inward focused and we start fighting about the color of the carpet, it feels like that congregation. We we've simply stopped looking, we've simply stopped looking outside the walls, and we're only focused in on ourselves. And that, to me, is not where we want to be. And so what you're doing and what you're encouraging people to do is to stop looking at the color of the carpet in the in the sanctuary. And look outside, there are so many opportunities. There are so many different tight ways to be a ministry in your neighborhood. That it's not, it doesn't have to take all day every day. It doesn't have to take all of your congregation budget. It could be something pretty simple. And it could be completely transform a congregation from inward looking to outward looking. And I think once that shift has been made, just incredible things happen. So I know you've already mentioned it, but I've just seen it happen so many times the inward focusing and the outward focusing and how different they are.

John Wight 41:18

Yeah, I'm so glad you brought it up again, because it is one of one of my passions is to try to get that message across. And and you name something else there that that I named before, but kind of in passing, and let me just lift it up again, because it is one of those things that people seem to need the permission to do. And that is, church doesn't have to be on Sunday morning. You know, it can be whenever the people are available whenever the need is there and we can reach it. I remember meeting with a congregation one time several years ago now. And one of

the things that came up was the fact that there's Something Sunday morning attendance had dropped pretty radically. And they identified the main reason for that, as being that most of the people in the congregation had to work on Sunday mornings, they all worked in this same factory. And so they and they all had to work on Sunday morning. I said, so have it on Tuesday night. And they said, You mean we can do that? And so I said, Absolutely. You know, you again, when you're with the Jews, you had to learn to be like a Jew and Gentiles had to learn how to be like a Gentile and, and so forth. And so there are a lot of things that we can that we can look at and say, oh, maybe we should try it this way. And so you know, to get out of that box that you were talking about Carla, to look at new ways of doing things.

Carla Long 42:49

Well, I just think this could be a real game changer for congregations, especially smaller congregations who, who may be a bit older, who think that they have nothing to offer. There's always always something to offer. It's gonna go just gonna be a little bit creative on sometimes on how you do it. Some of those older congregations, you know, they have a lot of money, and they can do a lot of things with that. And so, I mean, there's just so many ideas and thoughts. So, big question. How do people get their hands on this document?

John Wight 43:20

Yeah, it's at this point. They can just write to me, and that would be w i sorry, jwight@cofchristlorg. Let me do that again. jwight@cofchrist.org and ask for the new expressions collection. And I'll be happy to send it. It's it is in Word format at this point, because like I said, we're adding to it all the time. Now we are we have some plans to make it available on the church. website, but we're not there yet. We're still working on that. And so, you know, it would be a matter of just going in and clicking on a link. But we're just not there yet. And so if somebody wants it, they can write me and I would be more than happy to send it out to them.

Carla Long 44:17

That's very helpful. Thank you so much. So what about those congregations who are already doing something who are already having what they would possibly call a new expression? And they want to tell you about it? Is it the same kind of format just write to you and tell you about it?

John Wight 44:32

Well, we actually have a form and that form is used within the collection. And so if they would write and and say, I think we've got something that we would like to share, please send the form I again, I am more than happy to do that. It's it's because of good people like that, that were able to do this collection, because they're willing to share that information. But we have tried to make it uniform so that as people are using the code election, one report looks like the next rather than them having to figure it out. And so I would send out the report. And then they would send it back in, and we would add it to the new expressions collection.

Carla Long 45:12

Well, that sounds perfect. That sounds really, really great John. This is, this is so exciting to me to hear about. to have people know, they don't have to reinvent the wheel every single time so they can get ideas from hopefully, from this podcast, from the new expressions document. And I love that there's something out there like that. Thank you for your work on that.

John Wight 45:34

Oh, it's my pleasure. I've really loved working on this. And if I can just add one other thing to whoever, so that whoever is listening might give this some thought. Sometimes we get so involved in a ministry that we don't realize how special it is or how new it may be. And so I would encourage anyone who's listening to to think about Oh, yeah, I think maybe we are the only ones doing something like that because it's commonplace for us. We do it all the time. And it's just part of who we are. But it would be really helpful if we could share that with others who maybe have never thought of that sort of thing. So let me just encourage you to, to look at what you may be doing. And even though it may seem commonplace to you, it may be a good idea to share that so that others might hear that idea.

Carla Long 46:24

I agree and and what you just said, sparked something else in me. So I was thinking about those smaller congregations who put all of this effort into planning Sunday morning, you know, like it, it just is a huge burden isn't it seems like at times to prepare a sermon to prepare a worship service to make sure you have a pianist to so on and so forth. And I think about that burden on people sometimes. And I I just want to say again, if you need permission To, to do something completely different, maybe just serve breakfast, and sit around and talk around a table about important questions and build relationships, then do it. Right. Mm hmm. Yeah. I mean, like if church is, is causing you that much strife and issues then do something completely different. Please seriously have breakfast together. Everyone enjoys eating together just do something different anyway, that was just in my heart because I've told that to numerous congregations and like you said about your story. We can do that. And like, of course, relationship building is definitely part of what God is calling us to do. For sure. So anyway, sorry, John. That was a little bit of an aside, but I just wanted to say to people, not that they need Carla Long's permission to do anything at all, but it's, it's okay to do something that that the world church doesn't follow the world church helps I guess I should say.

John Wight 48:03

Yeah, amen. Amen. I'm glad you said that.

Carla Long 48:05

Yeah, exactly. And I'm always up for a good breakfast. There is no doubt about that. Well, John, I so appreciate you being on the podcast. Is there anything else that you wanted to say about new expressions that I didn't ask or something that you have missed?

John Wight 48:21

I don't think so. I think we've covered everything that that I think, needed to be covered. But again, I'm happy to communicate with anybody about new expressions even to kick ideas

around. So feel free to write me and we can arrange a time to, to talk or just keep writing or get together on a zoom conference or something. So I'd be more than happy to do that.

Carla Long 48:44

I love that. And just one more time. John's email is jwight@christ.org. So I know him folks will be happy to talk to you on email or via zoom. He's a pretty good guy. So thanks again, john, for being on the podcast. Oh, thank you very much.

Josh Mangelson 49:09

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