

329 | What's Brewing | Adam Wade
Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 00:17

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

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast for this episode, Karin Peter, and with me is Adam Wade. Adam serves on the Council of Presidents of Seventy. And he is also part of the Theological Formation Team for Community of Christ, although his background is in chemical engineering, and his ministry credentials, if you will, and that he has a Master of Arts in Christian Ministry from Community of Christ seminary. And when he begins to speak with this first sentence, you will notice that he is Australian. And he and his family currently live in Melbourne. So hi, Adam.

Adam Wade 01:14

Karin, how are you?

Karin Peter 01:15

I'm good, actually, today. As good as you can be, while we're still living with the realities of pandemics. So just to kind of give our listeners a chance to get used to your voice, give us a brief couple of sentence description of what the president of seventy is nice. But for me, it really comes down to what a seventy years and for me a seventy, as we've typically used, the phrase in the church of recent times, is a forerunner of Christ's peace, so that the priesthood office of seventy, coming from a scripture in Luke 10, where Jesus sent out seventy people to go into different communities, different subcultures different people, and to share the message that he was sharing at that time. And so we would see seventy as similar to that in going forward into areas to share the message of Christ as, as we would share it in today's world, in some different subcultures to be able to translate that message into those places. And so for me, a president of 70 helps to look for those opportunities to train individuals to journey with them as they go and share that message. Thanks for phrasing it that way, Adam, because that leads us right into our conversation so well, done. Because today, we're talking about what does it mean, the disciples and living our experience, community wise, our experience of worship and mission during this time of COVID-19, when we've shifted everything that we do online, that's how we're connecting with folks, both within the community of the church and outside the community of the church. So let's talk about that for a little bit. We're, what six months into the pandemic.

Adam Wade 03:04

And currently in Melbourne, we are still in stage four lockdown. So we have pretty strict restrictions on what we can and can't do. We can't go more than five kilometers outside, go outside of five kilometers from our home. And like one person is allowed to go shopping. And we've got restrictions on how long we can be outside to exercise. So it's been quite interesting. But I guess, for me, my current role is working with Apostle Mareva Arnaud in the Pacifikasia field. And so we do quite a bit of travel and zoom meetings, to the various areas that were responsible for. So having these last, well, at least six months, probably more now of being at home, it's given me a little bit of time to sort of sit back and reflect on some of the things that we're doing. And it's given me the space and also the opportunity to sort of listen to what various people were saying in the midst and see that the changes that people are just naturally doing that we may not have necessarily been engaged with because we were busy making sure that the church was open or that a program we were running was operating smoothly or our worship was being facilitated every week, or shared. So, so not having those things and being

forced, almost into a standstill has been really fascinating to see how people have chosen to respond in the midst of that.

Karin Peter 04:52

So let's talk about that. A little bit in the life of the church or church experience has been restricted along with the rest of us. experiences around the globe. So for many of us, along with having kids at home in different configurations of how they're doing school, we're home. Our congregations are meeting online, if they meet at all, same thing with small group and mission centers. What kind of impact does this have on our well-being both our spiritual well-being and our whole community kind of well-being? What are you? What are you hearing, as you listen to what's going on?

Adam Wade 05:27

It's been really funny. It's one of the one of the things I've heard over and over again, from different leaders or different members around all of the places where I serve, has been this quote, almost to say, "I can't wait to we can get back together again, I just want to get back together again with my faith." and it sort of is caused me to really think more deeply about that phrase. And ask the question, "Well, why? What, what is it about being together, that you're missing?" So we have these online experiences that you mentioned yet, that doesn't seem to quite be meeting that need, there's still this desire to be together, physically with one another, which is really fascinating.

Karin Peter 06:22

So as you hear this from folks about, we can't wait till we be until we can be together again. What, what is it you think people are missing? Is it pastoral care together? Is it hugging each other? Is it worship? What is what is it that people are, are yearning for when they say we can't wait to be together again?

Adam Wade 06:42

I don't know if it has to do with it. But am I missing that element of discipleship development of that spiritual connectedness that comes from being together in a community, if they're missing the sacraments, but even some of those things, we've tried to find ways to be able to do that with technology, even the element of pastoral care. And I'll come back to that in a moment. Because I think that's one of the other areas that I've really noticed a shift in the way that we interact as a community. So I then ask, Well, if it's simply just we want to be together, then why do we do some of those things that we do? Why do we go through a very almost formalized program of activities to help us engage with the Divine, to consider our own life and how we're going to choose to leave that loss in the world? Well, if no one has said, that's what I'm missing, you know, I'm really missing, sitting there for an hour with other people and considering how I'm going to shift my life, instead of just this, I can't wait to be together again. So if that occurs in the first 20 minutes, when you walk back through those doors, does that mean that then you that will start to get old again. And you'll start to say, hold on, that's, that's not really eight. That's not enough. So it's caused me to really start thinking about why do we gather? What is the purpose behind being with a group of like minded people, and using that, to perhaps shape the future? Rather than just going well, I miss, I miss being with these other people. But being uncertain about necessarily why. So taking that time to be creative, and go that step deeper and really ask, why, why am I missing this? What? What is that, that that added to my life that I'm not gaining through these other experiences? The other element that I mentioned was the pastoral care. That's another thing that I've really noticed, being ramped up. And that people have been reaching out to others that they've been picking up the phone, they've been sending cards, and not necessarily just the pastor, but different members of the congregation, people have been reaching out to their neighbors that they might not necessarily have spoken to for a long time. So there's the pastoral care element, when everyone is sort of going through a shared experience seems much more. It seems much more easy. It's much simpler to be able to reach out because we have that shared experience. And so it's just got me thinking about pastoral care in our everyday lives. Once these passes. Are we going to record

knows that it is actually really simple, we can just reach out to someone pick up the phone, talk to a neighbor, across the fence, do those things that have come so naturally, we just need to find that connection point. And is it as simple as saying, Hi, how's it going? I've noticed this, or I've been thinking about you and just thought I'd touch base and see how you were doing taking that extra moment of consideration that I find many people have done much more readily during this time.

Karin Peter 10:39

So it's almost as if our, our seclusion has made our yearning for and our practice of connecting with one another, more prevalent in our life.

Adam Wade 10:51

Yeah, and it's probably not something I necessarily would have personally held up high on my level of need, either, I tend to be an introverted person that likes my own space from time to time. And that I've always resisted in, in recent news, when people have said, it's all about relationships, that's often a phrase, it's all about relationships. And it's kind of always grated against me a little bit. Because, for me, I don't attend worship, I don't engage as a disciple, because I want to be in relationship with people, because I want more friends. But the reason I do that is because I believe in the message of Christ. And I believe that following and developing in my discipleship means that I am living a more full life, a life filled with joy and with hope. And so I didn't necessarily go along, to gain those things by being in relationship with others. But that said, I recognize that I believe and feel the love that God has for me. And so then the next stage, of course, is with God has that for me, then God must have that for the person sitting next to me. And so therefore, I also need to have that for the person sitting next to me. And so that's why I feel when we're called to be in relationship. Not necessarily, because it's nice to be friends with everyone. But because it's a much more deep experience to recognize that God has this love, and care and hope for all people as different and diverse as we are. So I guess, for me, then, therefore, once I understand that depth of relationship, I can then say, yes, it is about relationship. But it's not simply about, hey, we just need to be friends with everyone and get along. Rather, we need the community to continue to challenge us to continue to nurture us to surprise us, and to journey together with one another. Because it can get really dangerous when a single person without the community and to check says for believes certain things. And I believe that's why it's been so critical in our movement, to have things like congregational conferences, missions and a conferences, world conferences, where we sit together and say, as a diverse group of people do, we believe this is where God wants us to journey in the world. And that's been such a critical piece for me to have that understanding and reflection.

Karin Peter 14:04

So as, as you process this and watch this happening, from your perspective, where you are, and as you have articulated you have engaged in the life of the church in some really diverse communities, the Pacific edge of field has Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia,

Adam Wade 14:28

Hawaii, AJ, New Caledonia, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and we have a couple of other members scattered in countries in Asia. And yes, it does sound very exotic and people always go on it must be so difficult to travel to all those wonderful places. And, and I'll admit, I, I've got to share in some really wonderful experiences while I've been serving in those areas. It was funny the other day I was recalling this one experience that stood out for me. And we traveled in French Polynesia, to an island, now to get to these islands, we had to fly from Tahiti, the main island in Papeete, we had to fly to a separate small island. And then from there, we had to get on a boat. And we were traveling to an island that had a population of 68. Very, very tiny. And so our church turned up with about 200 or 300 members from all these different islands, because we're there to celebrate the opening of a new chapel that they'd recently built. And so after I was on the high seas, but a rolling up and down the waves, we arrived at this island,

and it's it's not the typical Tahitian island that you would see in the pictures of you know, the flat, sandy beaches and the palm trees and the blue water. This island is called Makatea And it's literally a giant mountain that rises up straight out of the ocean as this huge rock point, sticking up in the middle of the ocean. And so we arrived there and we sort of clambered down off the boat into these little gifts to get to the shore. And then we're buried in cars where we could try and get as many people into the car as was humanly possible. And we sort of arrived and, you know, we'd had the flight and we'd had the the long boat ride, and then we sort of busy unpacking, and all of a sudden, someone taps me on the shoulder and says, "Come on, come on, let's go!" And I'm like what, so we get back into one of the cars with 17 of my new best friends. And we then drive for about 15 minutes across the top of this island, and then descend down a road into this valley, into the middle of this really thick, humid, hot jungle type area. And, and there we stayed, and we're there for about 30 minutes, just sort of sitting there waiting and killing mosquitoes. And I'm sitting there thinking what, what is going on here. Anyway, at some point, someone said, okay, and everyone gets up. And so I look around and they all start trekking into the jungle, just on this tiny little path. We're journeying through this, this path, and then we suddenly arrive at this cave. But it's not like an entrance in the side of a mountain. It's literally a hole in the ground, about six foot wide. And there's one rope with a few knots tied on to it descending down into the darkness. And so someone pushes me forward and says, you go you go. So I stop clambering down and trying not to fall down into the midst of the abyss. And after about, I'd say, five meters, about 30 feet, we get down, after about 10 meters, which is about 30 feet, we get down to the bottom and here in this case is lit by a generator and some party lights is this small, perfectly still pool. And I'm sort of standing there in the darkness, as more and more people descend. And I then say our Apostle Mareva, who is from French Polynesia, she then descends in high heels which I was extremely impressed by and I felt ashamed that my poor effort. She gets down and then I realized as a minister and a youth go into the pool, that this is the baptism and the Tahitians start to sing and if ever you get the chance to hear Tahitians sing it is absolutely phenomenal. And so here I am standing on a tropical island in the middle of the cave. With Tahitians voices reverberating off the walls though it sounds like some sort of insane concert about to witness this baptism, this choice that this young person has made to join the Community of Christ and to journey with Christ as a disciple. And I remember thinking, with this giant smile on my face going this is the best baptism I have ever been to. And it's In that moment, if I was standing there that I then remember this other thoughts, and, and that's how I describe it in my life in terms of God, how God speaks to me, it's like a it's not a voice. It's like a thought. And this other thought came to mind. And it was just simply a question. It was, it was just simply a statement. And the statement said, except maybe your own, except maybe your own. And that really struck me in that moment to think about how important that decision was to me as a 12 year old, and how it had led me to those different experiences in my life, and how it led me to standing in that moment, at that very time. And I think that was a really significant experience for me in my journey to think yeah, I get to go and share in these wonderful experiences. And I think for me, it's, I'm really blessed to be able to journey with people. And that's what I saw it as. I saw it as this journey with that person that made the same decision that I made back when I was a youth. And I get to go to these places on yet I sound really exotic. And yet, it's more that I get the blessing of being able to see how people live, I wouldn't say I get to live how people live, because I'm only there as a visitor, I'll never be Tahitian I'll never be Korean. But to be able to sit and experience life as they experience life, I think for me is much better than staying in a resort or doing all those wonderful things you get to see on postcards, I get to sit in old beat up cars or in the back of taxis as we journey across and visit in hospitals, or go and see a member in their tiny little shack or meet someone at a cafe in a bustling city to be able to sit there and just for those few moments be able to share with them where they are on the same journey that we are.

Karin Peter 22:32

Which brings us back to our original question, which is what is it that we miss about being together? And I think you've just given us an excellent description about some of that.

Adam Wade 22:44

Yeah, and I think, as I've been reflecting on that, there's been two words that have really struck out the last few weeks for me, as well, thinking about what the future mean, for the church in various places. And I think the two words would be simple and meaningful. I just, I think sometimes we find this thing so valuable when we try and lay all of these things around it to show how valuable it is. For, you know, this, this journey of discipleship is connecting with the divine is so important in our life. So we want to try and put a whole bunch of energy and effort into things and make it almost overly complicated sometimes. But if we can just maybe take a step back and say, yes, it is meaningful. So let's try and make things simple, yet meaningful. And I find if we can strive towards that, then then perhaps, you know, we'll start tapping into these words that we also often hear such as well, we need to be authentic. And we need to be significant, we need to be just able to be able to reach out to the greater world. In some ways. I wonder, you know, do we just need to be looking at how can we make things meaningful for that group of people and just keep it really simple to be able to, to nurture our own discipleship moving forward?

Karin Peter 24:20

Well, that's part of what you described when you talked about what's happened with pastoral care where you are. And what you've seen, is that people have taken the very simple steps of recognizing their neighbors and, and contacting people that they care about things that we lose when we get complicated when we get busy when we do these other things. So when you talked about what it is to be a seventy and be a forerunner of Christ peace and taking the ministry of Jesus into places, what does that look like if we make it simple and meaningful? What does it look like to engage in mission in this life of online everything?

Adam Wade 25:03

Yeah, I think it's one of the other aspects of considered as I think, you know, being together and this element of getting back to worship and keeping it simple, that there's been one other piece that I've really been contemplating and that's around the element of accessibility. So what I mean by accessibility is, in the part before the pandemic, for most congregations, the accessibility point for that congregation was the Sunday morning experience. So the building was open for a couple of hours, and it was accessible to anyone, if you could drive there or get a bus there or, in some cases, catch a boat there, that that was accessible to you at that time, in terms of worship, and connecting with the Divine. Now, there might have also been other opportunities along the way. And so people would say, well, I connect through God by helping and serving others. And so they would have been different projects or programs in some congregations. But with the online element, it's made accessible in a very different way, time, is no longer really an issue, because if you don't choose to make the space for that experience, at the time that it occurs live, typically people will have the recordings that you can catch up with later. So it's now accessible at any time. So does that mean that people then say, Oh, boy, I can catch up with that anytime. And so they then put it off, because it's, it's not something that they had to sacrifice, or make a choice at the positive sacrifice to say, Okay, I am going to designate this amount of time in my life to be able to go and experience that it would be the same for for people that choose to ongoing develop that ongoing discipleship on a daily basis. So I'm choosing to separate out this 20 minutes in my morning to meditate or to read the scriptures or to to pray, I'm sacrificing that amount of time to that cause. So there's this online experience, I think is has for some people that have typically, maybe even habitually carved out that time, have now said, okay, the accessibility is much more fluid. And they may have found other things to be able to fill up that time and so therefore have not chosen to necessarily sacrifice or separate out that period for them in their daily walk. So then it brings up my question, well, what what does it mean for the church to be accessible? That's sort of the next step on the path. What if things were accessible? But we identified some of those things to saying yes, it's

important to be accessible, but there's an element there of pastoral care that needs to occur as well. There's an element of being a part of the community and not simply being an observer of a service, or an experience, once a week or on a regular basis. The sacraments are important. So what does that mean? How are the sacraments accessible? If you watch a recorded communion service, and it's not live? Those type of questions, I think, a really good questions to consider how do we continue to reach out and take what we think is an extremely valuable message to people that may be searching or seeking? And I think that's a really important question is how can we be the most accessible, we can be for other people to be able to experience what we have experienced and what we find valuable in our lives.

Karin Peter 29:11

So I've noticed as we've moved online, what we've done is we've taken what we normally would do on Sunday morning at church, and we've moved it online in many cases, which is fine, that's what we've traditionally done, but in reality online, has not just made us more accessible, but we can be more creative in what we what we do and how we choose to be together to nurture ourselves spiritually and missionally. So if you could identify one or two things for people to creatively engage in, in this particular time in the life of the church and in their discipleship, what would you What would you offer?

29:54

It's a good question. I've noticed online which I have found quite interesting, and other people have noticed that as well. But this cheering, I'd say that goes on almost on the online experience. So the in the chat box now, you can express how you're feeling. Whereas on a Sunday morning, I think the most I've ever heard in some places is there might be a bit of a clap. At the end of a testimony or a ministry of music that people are expressing, they felt something and said, they want to respond. Whereas now they have the ability of language through the keyboard. So after a sermon, you get these great job! Wonderful message, you know, and people have been saying, Are we going to experience this live in the congregation when we go back, which

Karin Peter 30:46

Wont that be interesting?

Adam Wade 30:47

Yeah, so people after you speak, "Great job! I really like that scripture!" So but for me, that says, I think that there's this want to be engaged, this idea of simply being an observer, from all of what we've talked about, that's the real shift that I see moving forward, there's, there's less of a desire to be an observer and more to be a participant. And so this idea of a single, or a few standing at the front, and a mass of people observing. I wonder if we're seeing a transition away from that to a much more participatory experience, to share deeply concerns or questions to explore, that we can start to see is that is connecting with the divine, and that is getting a sense of where God is calling us to go through that interaction with one another, not simply, I'm going to come along and sit and absorb. And then therefore, I'm then going to choose to adjust and adapt as I move forward into my life. But can we do that adjustment and that adaption with one another at the time, and we say that with, with different experiences in different congregations. So in Japan, for example, at the moment when I go, this is a congregation of about eight people. And yet they still have one person at the front, who tries and does quite a formalized worship service. And sometimes I sit there and say, Well, why can't we all just sit in a circle and just share in a much more what I feel would be authentic capacity? But there's tradition and Japanese culture and these type of things that are all layered into that. But having those experiences where you see what we might typically think is a quote/unquote, normal experience, or something that we've grown up with and done for years and years and years. When you see it out of context, in a different culture, it sort of makes you start to question well, why is it that we have this format, and we have this structure, when some of the places and some of the cultures would, when we drill down to it

in terms of the purpose of worship and the purpose of gathering, they'd be much more beneficial to be able to sit in a circle and share informally than they would be to try and have those six people seeing five hymns throughout a worship service.

Karin Peter 33:46

So we've gone from, from Adam, the introvert who, not really on board with it's all about relationship to your own journey of recognizing how relationships form in your own life, your own connection to others. Your story about, about going into the cave is is the story of going from observer to one who is your experiences connected to that young persons experience. So as we go forward, trying to live our discipleship in this pandemic, experience, how is your journey deepening for you and your discipleship?

Adam Wade 34:24

So I think part of it is that word journey that you use would be that we journey with others. But the cross is also journeying along with us, and that's probably the real linchpin, or the kick out for me is that we're not just a group of people on a journey, but there's a focus, there's a lead. There's an identity that goes along with that, and that would be Christ as the peaceful one. Christ showing an example that is different to the world and I think that that was the message that captured so many people, when he walked the earth 2000 years ago, it was these really simple but meaningful ideas about what it meant to be in relationship with God, and what it meant to be in relationship with others because of that. And so, for me that that journey that we're all on, and in terms of my discipleship and developing going forward, I want to try and look for those, those authentic, meaningful experiences where we can not necessarily do things because we think we should, or do things, because that's how they've always been done. But also not change for changes sake either, because we need to try something different to attract new people, but rather say, if, if we create meaningful things, people will want to come and be a part of that. There are people like us who need this message, and this hope and this joy in the life.

Karin Peter 36:02

Well, Adam, I want to thank you for spending time with us via technology today here at Project Zion. Before we close, do you have any last comments, last missional comments for us for our Project Zion listeners?

Adam Wade 36:18

I guess probably the only other one thing I was going to share. And it's it's been something that's been pretty personal and close to me, that probably sums up how I feel was about four or five years ago, my home congregation when I was a kid closed. So this is the congregation where I was blessed as a baby where I was baptized, I was confirmed, I was ordained, I experienced every single one of the church's sacraments in that space. And when the congregation closed about five years ago, people would ask me, well, you know, he said about that, is that, you know, is that depress you does that? How does that impact you? And my response has been, you know, what, we should have closed 10 years earlier. Because that was the point that we needed to step forward in a new form of mission and step forward with fights when we had this group of people. Yet at that time, I remember that if someone would move away, or someone was unhappy, there was almost this overriding sentiment of our, we've changed too much. We just need to try and hold it together. And then, of course, six months later, something else would change, or someone else would be unhappy. And it's like, well, we've obviously just kind of not got it, right, we just need to hold together. So, so for me, maybe that means I'm not very sentimental, but I think for me, it sums that up in saying what we need to be doing, we need to always be looking forward to where God is calling us into the future. So not necessarily hold on to what has been meaningful and sacred in the past in the sense of trying to harken back to those days, but saying, what are the elements of that sacredness, one of the elements of that meaning that we can look to take forward into the future and exciting new ways to engage us?

Karin Peter 38:27

Thanks, Adam, for taking this time to share with us here at Project Zion. May we wish our listeners that on their journey that they may find their encounters with the Divine to be simple and meaningful and accessible to us your descriptors. So thank you again for sharing with us. And for our listeners, this is Karin Peter, thank you so much for being with us.

Josh Mangelson 39:03

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple Podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you're there, give us a five star rating. Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries, or Community of Christ. Music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.