

**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. I'm your host, Karin Peter. And we're sharing a series of interviews with all the authors of the year long series of Herald magazine articles exploring the guiding question, "Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One?" For those of you who are wondering about the Herald magazine, it is the official Community of Christ publication that comes out every two months. You can find the Herald magazine at [heraldhouse.org](http://heraldhouse.org) under the tab Our Faith. For today's episode we are visiting with Elray Henriksen. Elray is the co founder of Co-Citizens, a local Belgian NGO working to alleviate poverty and facilitate cultural exchange in Brussels and the surrounding areas. Elray holds two master's degrees in peace building and in communications, we'll see how well that plays out for you here today, Elray with your communications degree. He is currently serving as a full time volunteer for Community of Christ Europe, as lead Member of the European peace and justice team, and as the National ministry coordinator in Belgium. So with all that said, Hi, Elray.

**Elray Henriksen** 01:52

Hi, Karen. How are you?

**Karin Peter** 01:54

Pretty good. Thank you so much for being with us today, here at Project Zion Podcast. I read your article and very much appreciated it and have been looking forward to visiting with you since reading it. So as we begin your article is titled Jesus as Sanctuary. So as a starting point, kind of for our discussion, can you tell us what you mean or define sanctuary for us?

**Elray Henriksen** 02:22

So I, I do think that it was kind of a initially a play on the word Jesus as refugee between article of this, this particular series, Towards the Peaceful One. And because we initially said Jesus as refugee, I was saying, Okay, so what is, what is the the follow up of that? And Jesus as Sanctuary is definitely for me the follow up, in one sentence, we can say that Jesus is fleeing, and therefore we should receive Jesus as a refugee. But then, when we are fleeing, Jesus is also the sanctuary to which we come to. So Jesus, for me is the embrace, the divine encounter that we have in community, with people we love with people who come to love us, people who understand us with people who are patient with us. So I do think that Jesus has sanctuary captures that image of us being Christ unto others, or others being Christ unto us.

**Karin Peter** 03:42

So in your article, Elray, maybe we can talk about this as a way to expand this idea of Jesus as embrace. You had a faith transition, and you refer to it as your sacred immigration, which caught my

attention. So can you tell us why you chose that phrase, why you refer to your faith journey that way? And tell us a little bit about that journey.

**Elray Henriksen 04:09**

So initially, I mean, one of the things that I do say is being a spiritual refugee. And when I say that, it's really, it's really a, it sounds like a loaded word. That it's a concept that we don't really, perhaps minimizes the reality of the what it means to be a refugee in the world today. And that's not how I meant it. So, so what I'm trying to say is that as an LGBT person, as a gay person, I found myself in my own previous religion with difficulties. It was difficult to be who I was, it was difficult to be open about my identity, about my relationship. And, and that difficulty kind of culminated at the point when I wanted to get married, I had to leave my religion. I had to leave Mormonism. And I think that was a difficult period in my life. And it's so sad that ultimately when you you're getting married, it's the most wonderful time of your life, right? And, and it comes with so much pain, or it came at least with so much difficulty at the time. I remember, we were in DC at the time. So that was in 2005-2006, I was studying my master's degree, and I remember going to an LDS church meeting where we were going to sustain or help kind of be supportive to gay member who was coming out to his ward at the time. And when he had done that, he was excommunicated. from, from his church. And we, my husband and I were at the time, we were just engaged, but we, we went and visited him and it was a painful visit. I saw how distraught the young man was. How hurt he was and I we came out from that and I said, I cannot be member of an organization that is doing this to people, I can no longer be supportive of an organization that is doing this to people. And realizing that I was the same, I was the I was the one who had been through exactly a similar hurt. So what happened ultimately, then, is that we left the LDS church, and Anton was also a member at the time. And we left and and we got married. And it took a few years before I came to the feeling of missing community. Being kind of having lost friends, having lost some relationships that were dear to me, I felt the need to find community. A new community something that would replace some of the old relationships that I had lost. I tried a political organization at one point and that was interesting. And, you know, with the greens in Norway, that was fascinating. I mean, I learned so much from that period, and then also discovered Community of Christ online. And that Community of Christ had at the time a small congregation in Oslo, actually 10 minutes away from where I lived. So it was only, all I have to do was to just get out the door walk for 10 minutes, it wasn't 10 minutes drive, it was 10 minutes walk and in Oslo that's incredible. and walked over to the to the house of Kerstin Jeske and knocked on the door. She was not in but Eric was and and since then they took me in, yeah.

**Karin Peter 08:40**

In your article, you talk a little bit about your experience and finding this group of people in Oslo that were Community of Christ. And you shared that you felt welcomed and included by them. And how was that welcome and inclusion expressed what what happened that allowed you to feel like you had safe harbor here with this small group of people?

**Elray Henriksen 09:09**

So it's kind of incredible when you think of it because it was in 2010 or 2009. So it was still early in terms of D&C 164, if D&C 64 had even come out at the time or was about to come out and I think I can't remember exactly how it all went, you know, chronologically, but at one point, I do think castine kind of said and there are some good news, you saw the you saw the Doctrine and Covenants 164.

And so so there was there was already, I think, an understanding in that little group of four people that being gay was not a problem. And I came with a lot of enthusiasm about the restoration heritage and I was ecstatic to know that revelation was still part of the tradition, Continuing Revelation. That some of the distinctives that I believed in, were still very much there, and that it was a peace church. So yeah, this was, I think, doctrinally, or kind of theologically, I was kind of, I felt very quickly at home, but also the, the four people who were there just treated me like somebody else. I mean, just like anybody else in the group, they didn't try to be special towards me, or they didn't try to be different there was I was just treated like everyone else. And just being treated like everyone else, is somehow perhaps the greatest sign of friendship. In a small community of 5, 4 or 5 people, that you get just, we just treat you like you were part of the group. And that's very important when you come and join some new church.

**Karin Peter 11:18**

Well, it showed a level of authentic relationship building with you, they weren't putting on anything special to make you love them, or treating you in any special way that showed that they were loving you it was simply a relationship develop.

**Elray Henriksen 11:34**

Yeah.

**Karin Peter 11:35**

That's lovely. So being treated like everyone else, being part of the group, being equal around the table is wonderful. But it also your experience with Community of Christ led to kind of a new insight that you talked about in your article, and that was that you developed a growing awareness that in Community of Christ, not everybody thought the same. Not everybody was on a journey to try to become unified in thought, and action, but rather, part of Community of Christ is celebrating the differences that we have, and understanding that we can be unified even with those differences. So how did that new insight impact you and your journey?

**Elray Henriksen 12:28**

So I think that's been a developing understanding of the last 10 years. I don't think at one point, I went like, aha, you know, this is a aha experience. Or, actually, no, I did have that. I had that my first World Conference in 2013.

**Karin Peter 12:47**

Oh, well, sure about that.

**Elray Henriksen 12:49**

Yeah. So I came to World Conference. And and I was just asking people around, you know, the people who were traveling with me and others, and I was like, my first my first reaction was really, when other prophets and the apostles going to talk, right? I mean, when are we going to be instructed? And? And the, the answer I got was, well, actually, the conversation is on the conference floor. And people don't, you know, the leadership doesn't really speak that often or that much to the group, they facilitate the discussion. That was a very strange new concept to me. I had never really experienced that before, or seen that and how that could play out. So, so this idea of common consent and trying to kind of reach

consensus, to have debate and to be upset at each other in church, on the conference floor, that the Holy Spirit could also work through righteous anger. You know, and that that, and I think it was, it was one when the conversation was about baptismal prayer. I don't know if you,

**Karin Peter 14:11**

I remember that conversation, indeed.

**Elray Henriksen 14:13**

Yes, yes. And it was about masculine pronouns and the use of those and whether or not we could find an alternative prayer baptismal prayer to consider. I don't think it passed, if I remember that, correct,

**Karin Peter 14:30**

It did not, no.

**Elray Henriksen 14:32**

But what did happen was that there was a sister who stood up and rebuked pretty much everyone in the conference floor, in the conference room in the auditorium for for continuing to use masculine pronouns in the conversation about whether or not we could have alternative pronouns. And I sank in my chair. I was like, Oh dear. How is that? Is it possible? Can we do that? Can we actually disagree and still go on in the conversation? You know, and he was nobody, nobody blinked an eye. I think I was the only one who sank in my chair. But obviously, this was this was something that was common practice something new to me. And that we were allowed to disagree and encouraged to speak up, and to let our voice be heard when something was happening in the conference floor that we disagreed with. So that is that was the first experience that was perhaps my aha experience about, oh, we can actually be in disagreement and still love each other.

**Karin Peter 15:54**

Yeah, a true aspect of community, isn't it? Yeah. Well, I can understand the surprise that World Conference, my first World Conference, I had some surprises as well. So I understand how that could happen. So I wanted to kind of jump forward just a little bit from that experience of the four people and Oslo, your journey forward, your participation in World Conference, and learning more about Community of Christ and what it means to live that out as a disciple. But then you ended up in Brussels. So first, briefly, how did you end up in Brussels? As we've just left you in Norway, and in Brussels, you describe your experience there as the only Community of Christ member in Belgium. And it was kind of comfortable in a peaceful, cozy kind of way, living out your discipleship there, until something unexpected happened. So how did you get to Brussels? And then take us from this kind of comfortable living out of discipleship to, "Oh, my gosh."

**Elray Henriksen 17:17**

Yeah, my husband, the the answer of how we got your heart to Brussels is actually quite simple. My husband got a job that was slightly unexpected. And that moved both of us here. And the idea was that I was going to study full time, I was going to, perhaps volunteer full time for church. We were, we were trying to see what was Elray gonna be doing for the next I think, three to six years, because that was the lot of time that we were gonna be, you know, in, in Brussels. So it was, it was new, we were trying

new things, in terms of living in a city we hadn't been in before. So so it was it was exciting. It was an exciting time. But as soon as we moved there, a few things happened in terms of the city being confronted with terrorist attacks, and and that also created some insecurity. However, the disruption really came in terms of I mean, let me say, first that I didn't, I went from having church once a month in Norway, to just doing church when I felt the need for it, you know, online, trying to kind of create my own online community of some sort with people around Europe who would need that. It was a lot of testing was a testing ground, I think, and going to World Conference, 2016 was going to give me new ideas about how to do that, you know, discovering that other people in the US and Canada had tested this and tried it out these online communities, so we were going to try something similar. But the the real disruption came when Joey the mission center president told me that there was a member in Brussels or a seeker in Brussels who was interested. And it they were there were actually two seekers in Brussels. The first one was Colin and is not mentioned in the article, because Colin moved to the US quickly after his baptism. But, but that that was a time where I was learning how to talk about the, talk about church, talk about gospel topics in a way that was, you know, inviting without, without commitment, you know, it's kind of it was it was, I was learning to establish church without it being strenuous. And by that, I don't know if, if you understand what I mean, but I did a one year missionary LDS missionary experience.

**Karin Peter 20:38**

I wondered if that's what you were struggling with trying to articulate here.

**Elray Henriksen 20:41**

Yeah, yeah. So I might as well just name it and just help people explain what that entails. And, and I had just been called as an elder in Community of Christ. And I was I was adamant, I said, it cannot be anything like my experience in Italy, if it becomes anything like my experience in Italy, I promise you, I will not be an elder. So, so I was I was adamant, there was just not going to be the same experience. I didn't want to have anything to do with the the idea of having to do missionary work or anything of that sort.

**Karin Peter 21:24**

And so to clarify for our Community of Christ listeners who are thinking, I'm not sure what that means. LDS missionary work is very different than what we talked about in Community of Christ.

**Elray Henriksen 21:37**

Yes, it's, well, it's different. And yet, there are some similarities, I would, I would say, because we're still trying to establish relationships with people. But, but the experience was very stressful for me as a Mormon missionary, because when I was gay, two hours in a different country, I was learning a new language. I felt I was I was pushed, you know, there was a, there was a push for meeting for meeting people, you had to knock on doors, etc, etc. Here in Community of Christ, we don't do that. If people contact us, we'll try our best to be a response to that person's needs. And I think and that was a difference, different approach. But when I was ordained, I remember being I remember agreeing with the person who was gonna ordain me that we needed to make sure that I didn't feel that becoming an elder and Community of Christ will have any, anything that would remind me of being an elder in your LDS Church. So sorry about that. But that was that was,

**Karin Peter** 22:59

No, but having visited with many people who served missions, I understand what you're what you're talking about. But you, but you got presented with this opportunity with somebody in Brussels,

**Elray Henriksen** 23:13

So first Colin was kind of what we ended up doing with Colin was like we, we, we had the coffee and orange juice, and on a Wednesday morning before work, so for him, it was just sitting and talking and enjoying each other's company, really, and trying to figure things out together as much as I was, I was still learning. And I can't say that even after the six years in the church that I knew my Community of Christ very well, because I think what I had learned in Community of Christ was the way we were more unofficial with each other more, that our friendships needed to endure, that we tried to be authentic with each other. These were kind of new ways of being church. And that's when I kind of tried to say in my article, that that was a new way for me to think about what it meant to be in relationship with people. And this needs to kind of inform also, our way of being together, with Colin who was also who also had an LDS background. So, so trying to discover what does it mean to be Community of Christ with two ex Mormons sitting around the table, reading through some of the material we had and and really just trying to discover what it means to be us in a different context, religious context was difficult enough. And then the mission center president, so Joey contacted me and said, Elray, we have a Congolese seeker from the DRC, who is looking into Community of Christ and would like to speak to a representative, and you are the only representative we have in Belgium. And you both live in Brussels, would you be willing to talk to him. And I was very apprehensive about that. I mean, that again, let me explain that I started feeling comfortable in the way Community of Christ was becoming for me, this, the warm embrace, that we can speak about at the at first that we spoke about at first is is became truly that, you know, safe space. And safe space is important when you kind of exploring a new religion and new faith community. But I do think that the my ordination and had something to do with it, that God had perhaps another idea about what what needed to happen, that I was not going to stay on my own in Brussels. And that something else was in wait. So it was a, it was a difficult time, because I really didn't want to disrupt anything, I was very happy with how things were. But, you know, one thing led to another and suddenly, I found myself meeting Me'thode at his house at his home and and meeting his family and his kids, two small kids, and two older kids and two older kids again. So it was a big family. And luckily, I came from a big family. So that was not a big shock to me. But what I was most afraid of was whether or not they would accept me for who I was. And, and we needed to speak about the elephant in the room very quickly. So that that wouldn't become a problem later. And I do think that this has been a topic for us, in Community of Christ in Brussels, but not not a difficult topic for me or Me'thode, some of the new friends that I made in the Congolese refugee community here. But if I see that what they ended up having to do was always having to potentially defend me to others. And that is a tall task to ask for people who are just discovering a new faith community. So what I can say a bit about that is also that I do think that we spoke when we spoke about these things, it was always that they didn't feel they had any other place to go either. And, and we had to negotiate this new space between us of what it meant to be Community of Christ in Brussels in Belgium, with a diverse group of people. Yeah,

**Karin Peter** 28:49

Very diverse. diverse backgrounds understandings perspectives, yeah, culture.

**Elray Henriksen 28:58**

But, but having said that, that's what helped me understand where they were coming from. Luckily, me My background is in peace studies. I did study the Congo for a couple of you know, during my undergraduate degrees, I kind of had an idea of what where they were coming from and what some of the challenges they had experienced. I did work for Norwegian crocheted, which is a development organization in Norway for eight years, with Burundi, and Congo, and eastern Africa and some of the places that that were familiar to them. I had lived a year in Burundi where they had been refugees while working for the United Nations. So my background was ultimately very well I was very well prepared for this particular meeting, for this particular encounter, but it was almost like, the things that I was afraid of, were in me. They were they were my fears, based on an understanding of the context and the background that they had, but it was still my fear. And how do we overcome fear when we try to establish Zion?

**Karin Peter 30:24**

And how did you overcome that fear, Elray?

**Elray Henriksen 30:28**

I think there was a lot of prayer, a lot of understanding that we were in the same boat, that my own sacred immigration, immigration, led me to understand what it meant to be a refugee, in spite of my experience, not being at all like theirs. So I have a lot of respect for what they've been through. And when, and when we when we speak about these experiences. Those are the ones the very sacred moments in a relationship formation. When we go beyond what it means to be friends, we become trusted friends. Because we trust each other with each other stories. And to trust each other with each other's stories is a big step in the formation of sacred community.

**Karin Peter 31:35**

So you've stepped out of what was becoming quite comfortable for you. And you have entered into ministry as an elder, you've met new people and built community and relationship with them. So what what happened from that.

**Elray Henriksen 31:59**

So Me'thode was excited, ultimately became very excited about. I mean, we've had him on Project Zion already, we've heard some of his stories. And Me'thode got very excited about Community of Christ and and wanted to tell everyone, and I think he also had a Mormon background. So so he was also, he thought, I think that he thought that the job was to get as much as many people as possible, enlisted. And I kept on trying to put on the brakes, and saying that was not necessary. And really, we don't want to disrupt what we have going on for ourselves here. You know? And really, yeah, there was exactly this, like, my experience in Community of Christ is that there is four people maximum who meet, we don't have we don't have to be a big group, you know?

**Karin Peter 32:59**

Four is good.

**Elray Henriksen** 33:00

Yeah. Good. So so let's not, let's not open the doors wide and bring people in, you know, we can open them slightly, so that people can have a look and feel Is this okay for me? And then get in? Right. So so that those were kind of some of the the, I think the cultural differences that we tried to negotiate at the at the beginning. And through him, I met several others, including Roger, who I speak about in this article.

**Karin Peter** 33:36

So let's talk about that experience. Because building community means building community, sometimes with people who are really hurting,

**Elray Henriksen** 33:48

Me included.

**Karin Peter** 33:50

Which is where this took you. Yeah, you really had to revisit some of that. And so what happened?

**Elray Henriksen** 34:02

Well, I think that what happened, I remember us visiting a brother than who had also been at one of our meetings. And, and this was Roger, and we were we went to his place. And he trusted us very quickly with his story, which was both daunting and difficult to deal with. You know, he was alone, he lived in a small place and and felt very hurt about the things that had transpired in his life. And I had no idea what to do. I really felt completely hopeless and powerless. And that's when sacrament sometimes comes in. The power of sacrament in terms of transformational power. Joey offered him a blessing, we prayed for him and with him. And I put my hand on his shoulder. And we had a very special sacred moment of reflection and hope that bound us together. And I, and it's been, it's been amazing to see how people have then grown into what it means to be Community of Christ. Sometimes that growth has been difficult and painful, and strange. You know, I mean, people kind of ask themselves, what am I doing here are these people really the friends that I want to have? You know, I mean, there's been a lot of questioning right, in the process of creating sacred community. But we had people come in support the efforts that we were trying to do. So Sandee Gamet and Andrew Bolton came in and spoke about peace, about how to build peace and communities, how to manage interpersonal relationships, all all things very helpful to a new group that was starting off who it's not that they knew it, they I mean, they had come to know each other, as well. So these were new people, they were new people to each other. So so it was, it was very difficult for me to get a sense as well of what was happening in the group, and the dynamics in the group. But it was fascinating. And we got kaiulani, Brother Kahealani, from French Polynesia to come and help, because we had a lot of people asking us about Community of Christ. So the work that Roger and Me'thode were doing, in terms of spreading the news was, was really reaching out and and people were curious, what is this? What is this community, this new faith that we're trying to establish in Brussels? And I, to this day, I think that we've heard from the testimonies of, of new people who are joining at this time, who said, we thought it was a joke three years ago that it would never happen that this thing would never fly. Three years later, we still add it. And we are seven eight people who still go strong, you know, who still want this. It's it's it perhaps I've done it too much after



according to the Norwegian model, you know, that we are now in the COVID season, we are we are meeting only twice a month online. But I do think that there is something special now about what's happening in our group that has cemented the relationships, consolidated, the relationships, sometimes even moments of crisis can be informational about the next steps to take.

**Karin Peter 38:33**

And all of that happens in community or in sanctuary if we talk about the title of your article.

**Elray Henriksen 38:42**

Yes. It happens in the embraces, and I think the I think now COVID is is definitely making this difficult. We don't get the embraces anymore. The physical embraces, and, and I think a lot of us are missing that.

**Karin Peter 39:03**

Absolutely. So Elray, um, I love your description of you trying to keep that door just cracked open a little bit. And not too sure where everyone else in their tenacity was on the other side of the door, pulling it from you and opening it. And that's really what happened the door open in in Belgium. And so, not only did your group expand, your ministry expanded, we talked earlier before we begin recording your pastor now and loving people in community in Belgium, and also, you co founded this organization, Co-Citizens. All of this has transpired kind of at the same time. Can you talk about those two things?

**Elray Henriksen 39:58**

So actually what happened? First was the the Co-citizens. You know, we wanted the project, we wanted something that would make the mission initiatives actually real for us in in community in Brussels. So we quickly started talking about the Brussels project or some some form of project where that that would happen here with the people who were here. And and I think the vision is still for many of us in the group that we would have a community resource center at some point, something that can serve as a church building, that can serve the community, that can serve especially the refugee community in Brussels. So that's still our hope, that long term hope now I'm starting to realize with with the challenges that we've had, that we can create something of that sort in the years to come. But there are many steps on the way to do something of that sort. And I think it's to continue to abolish poverty within the group. So that in implies tailoring projects and implies microlending projects, it implies teaching the kids you know, so homeschooling. So these are now some of the projects we are doing or we'll be doing as soon as COVID permits us to be in close contact with each other again. So So meanwhile, what we are actually doing now is we've asked three of our members to interpret or translate the church material, the first three courses in terms of Water and Spirit, Ministry of the Disciple, and Introduction to Priesthood, into Swahili, because the challenge is that, even though people speak French, and I speak French, I don't speak Swahili. And most of the people in the families speak Swahili. So the challenge is really to get the message across, and to enable people to themselves know what this community is all about. So we're using, you know, so we are working now with three of our members to create that kind of material. It's exciting. It's an exciting period to be in for the community, because we are now going deeper into the material and try to understand what this all entails. Yeah.

**Karin Peter 42:50**

So I'm smiling, because I'm thinking about Acts 2. And I'm thinking about this small community in Brussels and translating material into Swahili is kind of living out the restoration principle, isn't it of restoring early church experience? And how God's Spirit works in the small communities?

**Elray Henriksen 43:13**

And absolutely, it's kind of funny, because I've done the I've done a reflection this this week for something I'll be saying on Sunday. But that we are, I don't think we are called to restore primitive Christianity anymore, or an imagined primitive Christianity. And I think we've come to be asked, we've been asked to embody Christ, God's shalom into the world. And that is what I mean by Jesus as sanctuary. It's a it's like, creating those sanctuaries, those places, those embraces those encounters between people that make up a sacred community. And that embody what it means to be Christ in the world today, not 2000 years ago, not 200 years ago, but today, and now the challenges are really the following. I mean, it's it's, we have diverse communities living in the same city, people who are trying to make ends meet in difficult very difficult times. But at the same time, there is support to get some of us have more and have so we can give and share and an encouraging generosity, even within a group that doesn't have that very much, reminds me a bit of what the father in law of Moses sang in the Prince of Egypt. When, when, when all you have is nothing, there's a lot to go around. And that kind of is a bit the spirit that we have in our group at the moment, I think that Roger now has his family here. They arrived the day before the COVID, the first COVID lockdown. And they had no place to go and live. So they ended up living with Me'thode's family. So suddenly, they went from being six people in the house to 11. And what I mean, the reason I'm just mentioning that is to talk one about the generosity, that people people called the generosity principle, they caught the vision of that. And it was not something I had to teach them, it's something I learned. And that you can be you can go beyond what you think is necessary. And and I know some of our members have done that, in the process in the last few months, have really gone beyond what is necessary, and what is asked for required. But they have caught the vision themselves of what it means to be Act 2 or Act 4. And so I'm learning I'm learning a lot from this process.

**Karin Peter 46:28**

Earlier, you said there was a realization you're in, you're all in this together, you're all in the same boat. And it sounds like that boat gets bigger and bigger with what's taking place. I wanted to ask you, El Rey, this, this conversation we've had, it has been lovely in illustrating what it's like to have one's comfort disrupted and to grow in ways you didn't imagine. What would you say to folks who are listening who are nervous about their own sanctuary or their own safe space in Community of Christ been disrupted?

**Elray Henriksen 47:10**

I think cracking the door open is perhaps the the way to go about it. I mean, like I said, you know, it's, it's okay to be apprehensive, it's okay to be afraid. It's okay to be worried about one's own sanctuaries. being changed or transformed or going from one thing that was familiar and I, you know, I've, I've talked to a few Community of Christ, lifelong members about what it means to have Mormons coming in ex Mormons. You know, I don't think that, that that's a comfortable place to be for, for this tradition. And there are some things that are probably grounded, I mean, that there is reason to be to be a bit

apprehensive, there's always going to be reasons to be apprehensive of certain things. But the culture of Community of Christ is very strong. There is something very, that I've come to learn in the last 10 years, that has really transformed me. It's deep culture, we are heavily invested in our relationships, we heavily invested in, in what it means to be community. And I think that is where we can be sure that it might change a little, it might because of the people who come in, but it's, it's worth doing it. It's worth engaging in those relationships, and engaging it with the idea that we want to maintain but what it means to be Community of Christ, you know, that that idea of who Community of Christ is and is becoming, you know, is is a is a is good enough, is safe enough. So, so I'm I'm confident that good things will happen from in the future, as we open the doors slightly.

**Karin Peter 49:37**

And I still see everybody on the other side of the door in your small group trying to get you to open it just a little. So Elray first, thanks for sharing this with us. I want to point people again to your article, Jesus as Sanctuary and they can learn more about some of the incidents and people that you've shared with us today. But this is has helped us get more of an understanding of where, where that writing came from, for you, and I thank you for opening yourself up to us today in in sharing your story a little bit more. But as we bring our conversation to a close and think about what really does it mean to move towards Jesus the peaceful One? Do you have any closing thoughts you'd like to share with our listeners before we go?

**Elray Henriksen 50:27**

Yeah, so I do, I do mention two scriptures in this article. And I just want to quote a bit on the quote from them and read them, because they speak to, the speak so well to what we what we discussed. So the first is Luke 11:9. "So I say to you ask and it will be given to you. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be open for you. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened." And for me, knocking on my first door to Community of Christ, to now having people knock on mine. Is speaks a lot about our responsibility as members and Community of Christ to open the door. Like I said, I mean, it was like even if it's only slightly cracked open, because we're not sure about who's on the other side. Being willing to engage in that relationship and trying to find out what people's stories are might transform us and then being willing, like Jesus, when the when the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for 12 years, try to find out, you know, perhaps if I touch his robe. But when Jesus says who touches my clothes, or which touched my clothes, and had sense that there was power that I'd gone out of him, then I'm kind of I'm kind of thinking that there is that that little encounter is not even an embrace. But it's sufficient to know that Jesus serves as sanctuary for us that healing is possible. It might not be physical healing, like we've expected, since well, if we take the Scripture literally, but but there is a healing that takes place. There is something that is unusual about encountering Jesus in those embraces, in those, perhaps if I just touch his clothes, I might be healed.

**Karin Peter 53:11**

Elray, thank you again, for sharing with us. Jesus sanctuary, where healing and transformation take place. And thank you for sharing it through your own story. For our listeners, this is Project Zion Podcast. I'm Karen Peter, and we've been visiting with Elray Henriksen, who lives in Belgium. And thank you so much for listening.

**Josh Mangelson** 53:44

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