

**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.

**Robin Linkhart 00:33**

Hello, and welcome to another episode of Project Zion Podcast. This is your host Robin Linkhart. And today is another edition in our series, What's Brewing, where we explore how God is showing up in the neighborhood, and people of faith are living out mission and transforming ways. Today we are here with Kris Judd and Dr. Vincent Lewis. Kris is a lifelong member of Community of Christ, and has served the church in a number of ways, congregational youth leader, outreach minister, and pastor to name a few. She also served as the international Community of Christ staff pastor. She served as a Community of Christ president of 70 for a number of years, including secretary for the council. Currently, Kris holds the priesthood office of evangelist and supports the ministries of evangelists around the world by serving as the secretary to the order of evangelist. Kris is a certified spiritual director, offering spiritual direction to members serving as staff for the spiritual formation and companioning program, as well as the world church spiritual formation team. Kris and her husband Peter live in Des Moines, Iowa, where she is involved in ministries at a congregational, mission center and community level. And on top of that Kris is now a licensed private investigator in the state of Iowa. From an early age Vince knew he was destined to help others. His eager support of community projects as a middle schooler, eventually led to continued community service as a teacher and later a principal. His service expanded to include community boards, committees and ordained ministry. One constant thread ran through everything, the celebration and appreciation of diversity. And Vince has a list of diverse experiences to match football, wrestling, military service, woodworking, degrees, and elementary and special education, including master's and specialist degrees, and a doctorate in administration and counseling. In total, Ben served 39 years in Des Moines public schools. Post retirement for a man who simply cannot sit still found events at children and families, urban movement, and inner city community based Youth and Family program. Vince became a member of Community of Christ in 1977. He has served in many leadership roles as an ordained minister including mission center, President Financial Officer of lamoni heartland mission center, 2015 to 2020. The list of public and community service goes on and on. Vince and wife Melinda are retired public school teacher and consultant, and now a full time artist, reside in West Des Moines, Iowa. They have four grown children and six, listeners, I want you to hear this six beautiful and perfect grandchildren. Vince and Kris serve as co chairs of the labony heartland mission center diversity team. And I gotta tell you, they are a ball of energy and put those two together and who knows what might happen. In 2020, the diversity team embarked on a new journey providing a series of online diversity workshops intended to help the church and its disciples learn how to uphold and live the principle the worth of all persons and to also pursue the church's mission of peace. These workshops focus on actions and behaviors that allow each of our previously marginalized brothers and sisters, to feel included,

valued, respected and appreciated. The workshop looks at the big systemic picture of exclusion and misunderstanding those who are viewed as other, as well as taking a good look at our own congregations and lives, to see where God is inviting us to repent and change. So a great big welcome to you, Kris and Vince. It's great to have you with us today on Project Zion Podcast.

**Kris Judd** 05:37

Thank you, Robin, it's good to be here.

**Vince Lewis** 05:39

Thank you, Robin, thank you for the invite.

**Robin Linkhart** 05:42

So let's just take a few minutes to get to know you a bit better. Please tell us something about you how you became connected with Community of Christ. And what brought you to a life of ministry so deeply connected with justice, and peace. Vince?

**Vince Lewis** 06:03

Well, first of all, my connection with the justice and peace efforts. As a young loud, I was very much interested in the civil rights movement. It was very active during my youthful years. I remember I recall, a period of time in my life where I had to make a decision as to whether Malcolm X was that was going to follow, or Martin Luther King. And as a young child, being one who was not fond of violence was not a find, find a physical aggression, or being mean to people, I really liked the teaching of Dr. Martin Luther King. And so I have always tried to be a student of Dr. Martin Luther King and a follower, and a student of the civil rights movement. And with that, it was a natural transition as I grew older, and studied more and more, learned more and more and taught more and more about peace, about justice, about civil rights about human beings treating all human beings in a humane manner. And that was a natural transition as I became associated with the church. My association with the church came later, much later, as you mentioned earlier, and 1977. And it was by way of young lady that I was working with, at my first teaching position. And it was her first teaching position as well. And so she introduced me to the church invited me to a young adult activity at one time, and enjoy that that activity, then another young adult activity, and then finally a couple of church services. And I simply grew from there. That young lady that invited me to that is now 42 years, three years of being my wife, but that's how I became introduced and from unaware of the church.

**Robin Linkhart** 08:04

Thanks, Vince, Kris?

**Kris Judd** 08:07

Robin, as you mentioned, I have been a lifelong member of this church. And as I've thought about my life, and how and when and where did this interest in passion for peace and justice, especially for those on the margins? How did that come about? It's been a part of my life since I was a child. And I think, I think a good part of that was the stories of, of Zion. The dream of Zion, peaceable kingdom, and this place of justice for all. And I remember as a kid being drawn to those other students or children in my classes, that were on the edges for a variety of reasons. And that continued on, as I got into high school and in college and my desire to, to help people is always been present. Now my Welsh cousin Dick Griffiths would say that my fight for justice and peace as part of my Welsh background, and so we'll have to ask apostle Richard James, if that's the case. And then when I worked at Norton Heights when I was working with the Bible club and the homework club and working with kids on peacemaking, you know, I was working with children of color, primarily, students or children that were from Hispanic backgrounds and facing immigration issues and, and all of the different ways that they were encountering challenges in our society, but also Black children. And I just became more sensitized to that. And now as I live here in Des Moines, and I'm getting close to my family. I have three children in my family, my great niece, two great nieces and a great nephew, who are all children of color. And I think about what has happened in our country just over this, for example, over the summer, with George Floyd and looking at Amari who is going to be three this month, and wondering if, as a young Black male, he's going to have to worry about being shot while running down the street playing or getting a candy bar out of a store or misunderstood. And it breaks my heart for the children of today and the children of tomorrow. And so I feel like a compelling reason to continue in my life, this desire and interest in peace and justice, especially when it involves people on the margins.

### **Robin Linkhart 10:55**

Those are amazing stories. I love hearing these threads of themes, Vince, your involvement with the civil rights movement, and the poignant choice that you made between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. With that sensitivity already developed at a young age for the way of peace and choosing a non violent path and your story of learning and then becoming one who teaches others. Both of you, it seems, began that journey as young people, Chris as a child hearing stories of Zion, the peaceable kingdom, that sense of justice for all that deep, inner yearning to help people. And then your work as a pastor of a congregation that was in the midst of an ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood, bringing you side by side with people of different backgrounds and color. And now your own family representing a similar diversity just deepened. Both of you have such a sense of compassion and desire, which, wow, what a combination of being fully present in people's lives, but a commitment to doing something and taking action. In 2020 COVID-19 plunged our world into a global pandemic. And today, February 9 2021, we are in the early days of the vaccine rollout. Infection rates are sky high, and the future is uncertain. But the pandemic is only part of the 2020 story. On May 25 2020, George Floyd a 46 year old Black American was killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, while being arrested for allegedly using a counterfeit bill. During the arrest of white police officer knelt on Floyd's neck for about nine and a half minutes. Mr. Floyd was handcuffed and lying face down to other police officers assisted in restraining Floyd while another officer prevented bystanders from interfering with the arrest and intervening as the

horrors unfolded. Early on during the arrest Mr. Floyd complained about being unable to breathe. Once on the ground and restrained with an officer's knee in his neck. He became more distressed and complained repeatedly about breathing difficulties. He verbalize fear that he was about to die and called for his mother. After several minutes he stopped speaking, he stopped moving minutes continued to pass. Finally an officer checked for a pulse and found none. bystanders continued pleading, but the kneeling officer kept his knee firmly against Mr Floyd's neck only removing it when the medics told him to do so. George Floyd was dead. The encounter lasted eight minutes and 46 seconds and ignited a chain reaction across the nation inciting large protests against police brutality and systemic racism in more than 150 American cities during the weeks and months that followed. But it didn't stop there. George Floyd's murder triggered waves of activism across the globe by the 10s of 1000s at a time estimate, say as many as 26 million people participated in the USA alone. So Vince and Kris, the question I would like to ask you now is how did this event impact your life and ministry, and the direction of the diversity team in Lamoni Heartland Mission Center? Vince, would you like to go first?

**Vince Lewis 15:28**

Sure, thank you. First of all, I would emphasize this, this event was extremely impactful. And not only to myself and as, as any, and all African Americans or people of color throughout the world, if you will, because I had the I had the occasion, as all of us did, to see protests going on in London, and various places throughout the world and Australia. So it's very impactful, narrowing it down here to the Lamoni Heartland Mission Center. It impacted our mission center, because our people would believe that social media and I'm not a big fan of social media, but in this case, it was very beneficial. Because everyone had a camera. And young lady very clearly, with, with great guts, went ahead and filmed the whole thing. And it's because of her taking the nerve, and filming that and posting it on social media that people who typically were blind to those types of things occurring in the United States, especially in the northern part of the United States, that heard about it for years if they were at all aware, but thought it was just made up, or not real or not severe, were really made aware of their eyes were were opened. And they, people who typically were passive, about this type of things, began to say that, "What can I do I need to do something. This is horrific. What can we do?" And a year prior to that incident, when I was Mission Center President, I had a work, a work session to work on it and putting together a diversity workshop here in the Lamoni Heartland Mission Center. And I asked for volunteers, and got several volunteers. And then I asked congregations to contact us regarding doing a workshop with their congregation. Well, the response was from the congregations was zero, and no one responded. And so the people were very interested that that group of 12, were still very interested in being part of a training and presenting but we were going to respond according to request. Well, there was zero, there was nothing. And during that time, Glenn Johnson came to be our Mission Center President. And during the George Floyd time, Glenn, was also impacted by what was going on with George Floyd. And he had stated and started that and asked Kris and I to restart, and be involved and head up our lamonte, heartland mission center diversity workshop. And because of COVID, we weren't did not have the opportunity or occasion to wait for congregations to respond and asked us to come in. But we were able

to take a new and different approach to our presentation modality, which proved to be significantly more effective than the one that was proposed the year prior to.

**Robin Linkhart 18:50**

That is fascinating, and to hear just the beginnings of your story, and also how COVID impacted the response and the the method by which you shared. Kris, what is your experience of this event and how it impacted you, your life, your ministry and the direction of the team?

**Kris Judd 19:16**

Well, like as Vince said, and like so many of us, I was horrified by what I witnessed on TV and social media regarding George Floyd and all of the other cases that had proceeded are not all of them because we have no way of knowing the extent of the violence and of the the disease of racism and how it's impacted our brothers and sisters since for the past 400 years, but it was either the next day either the 26th or the 27th. I woke up and I was scrolling through social media, and I saw something about was a, an invite to listen to some podcasts had listening in the title. And I thought, well, this might have to do with spiritual direction. So I clicked on it. And it was about listening. And it was a podcast that was talking about listening to what's happening in the country and to the feelings surrounding racial injustice. And the podcast, what the talker, the presenter was interviewing an author who had just published a book called Good, White Racist? And there's a question mark at the end of that title, and her name is Kerry Connelly. And I just felt something stirring in me like I need to do something. I can't just sit and watch what's happening without responding in some way. So I listened to the podcast and then I wrote, just I made a comment in the social media feed, saying, you know, I would love to get a book group going and study this book, and the person that was helping with a podcast responded and was giving me some encouragement. And so I responded again, and, and then ultimately, I had a little, a little text back and forth with Kerry Connelly, saying, hey, if you do a group, let me know I'll jump in on zoom sometime. So I thought, "Oh, my gosh, I've got this opportunity. You know, what am I going to do now?" So I called a good friend of mine, who's here and said, "What do you think I've never done this, you've she'd had never started a book club." But we felt motivated. And so I put it out on on Facebook, hey, if you're interested in learning about racist systemic racism, and what our role as good people, you know, that idea if I'm a good person, and I'm still racist, how can those two things go together? And, and so I put it out there with a beginning date, and I had about 40 people sign up. But what was interesting, let's say that was, that was maybe the day after the George Floyd. So maybe the 26th. I was looking back at my calendar on the 29th. I'd signed up for a class on Julian of Norwich, because I was going to be doing a session with the Spiritual Formation Team about Julian as a mystic. And during the presentation, there was a time of questions. And I asked the presenter, what would Julian say to us about the the disruption and the upheaval in our culture today. And he mentioned this was president or referenced a podcast he had done earlier in the week with an author named Kerry Connelly. Here, I was taking a class three days after I had heard this man interview carry, which started me on this journey of gathering with others who are interested in learning what we need to do to change. I just thought, what a God moment. That was for me, and of course, I could hardly keep myself contained. I had to tell him, Oh, hold on, you

know, and I don't know what he thought of me, but but Sue and I had our weekly class, and we had people from around the country, all church members. And we ended up with probably 25 regulars that showed up every week, until we got through the book. And then when we got through the book, they said, We don't want to stop can we still meet and so perhaps 15? 10 to 15 of us meet every month just to give support to each other? How's it going with your anti racist work? Carrie Connelly did jump on to one of the calls, was a gracious author and shared as a White person, learning, navigating as a White Christian female navigating the waters of what it means to become anti racist, not just an ally, not just someone that likes people of color, but someone who is actively working and speaking her voice to address issues that have to be said and because she has the privilege of being White. She can say things that that others can't. And so and then Vince invited me or When invited me to be part of this team. And so all these things were flowing together, I feel very much it was led by the Spirit and touched those places in my life that have always been linked to fighting for peace and justice.

**Robin Linkhart 25:19**

Talk about divine synchronicity. And in both your stories, I mean, Vince to have the vision and the prophetic presence in the mission center to establish a diversity team and lay a little bit of foundation, so it was there. And both of you finding each other in I mean, I know you know each other, but having your paths cross in this in this new way, and just the the threads of this divine synchronicity bouncing around. Now what we want to know is tell us all about the diversity team and this workshop series that your team launched in Lamoni Heartland Mission Center, we want to know about your vision, the focus of the content, you've prepared, how you delivered it, we know you did it online, but we're all learning about what that looks like. Maybe some of your goals and hopes for this series. And and how does this all connect with mission?

**Vince Lewis 26:28**

Okay, I think I'll go ahead and start, if you will. I first want to commend our team in that thus far, we have had approximately six classes. And in February, we have will, we will have a privileged class taught by our mission center president, Glenn. But our team have stepped up and said that yes, I would like to be a part part of it. Oftentimes saying Yes, I'd like to be a part of a committee, or a board. It's a matter of occupying a chair. But this is a very hard working team, the diversity team each of them. And what we have done is that we have looked at different many different aspects of racial injustice, and systemic injustice and racism and prejudice and biases, and privileged the many aspects and identify topics. And different members of our team have chosen to take one of those topics, and to go in depth, depth, deep, deep study regarding that topic, and not only deep studying, but in preparation for a 90 minute preparation, minute, 90 minute presentation. And so I commend the team for doing that. That's not easy work. That is hard work. And Kris wood would say Also, our team members are very passionate as we are regarding the topic. Hence, I believe, and may be biased. But I would believe hence the quality of our presentations in the Lamoni Heartland Mission Center from our team members. So again, we have people who have volunteered to be a part of the team and some we've sought out. And we will continue to do that in 2021. Seek out members to be a part of a team, we will be discussing,



again, our continuations for 2021 and topics and how we are approaching them. And as we move out of isolation, how are we going to bring this information to the individual congregations? So those are the in regards to your question to the directions we're going to go that is that is not quite decided yet. But we have decided that must continue. We recognized that diversity competency, is not a destination. It is a journey. Becoming a welcoming congregation is not a destiny, it is a journey. And it's a journey that we all should be constantly working on. And I believe very strongly that when we know better, we do better. And we constantly should seek to know better. So we're constantly doing better.

**Kris Judd 29:38**

Yeah, I would say I agree wholeheartedly with what Vince has, has shared and I think that's one of the one of the surprising things and we can talk a little more about that in a little bit. But one of the surprising things for me has been this team of people, just ordinary Church members and leaders in the in the mission center. All of us are white, we've all lived from that perspective. And yet with that desire to understand, and to because of our understanding, be able to, to change. So some of the topics that we've talked about in these 90 minute presentations have been, you know, discrimination and prejudice, you know, what are those? What's the difference, and really getting into this idea of that, that we encounter prejudice that we are raised in a system that fosters fear of the other. And so for people to say, "Oh, I don't have a racist bone in my body." would not necessarily be accurate, because we all have prejudices and isms that we struggle with. And so many of those are, are deeply hidden within us. We're not even aware until they rise up and surprise us. And so implicit biases, we've talked about those, and and where do those come from? And how do we deal with them? We've talked about the whole topic of inclusion and diversity. And Vince has shared his story. And I think his has shared some, some elements of what it's been like being a church member, one of the few black church members in the lamoni, heartland mission center, and as a leader, and I think he has shared so personally and vulnerably, that it has allowed, its invited people to want to go deeper. As you mentioned, as Vince mentioned, we're going to be talking about white privilege, this coming month, and that is a very, that can be a very hard topic for us to discuss, because I remember what some of the comments were things like "I can't be privileged, I grew up poor." And so to, to say, "yes, you may not have had economic privilege, but by virtue of you being your skin being white, you have privileged that you didn't ask for, that you're not even cognizant of. And it's not about taking away your privilege, but it's about using your privilege to help others that that don't, and so that we have equal access to all that all that we need." So we've had a variety of, of topics microaggressions, and how those covert, intentional and unintentional, most often, they're unintentional things we say, and that we do impact the lives of members in our families, in our congregations, you know, in our communities. So our goal is really to raise the level of awareness of the things that that we do that are unintentional, that we might just be good people, but we do things that are not helpful, because we don't understand. And it's been said, when we, when we know better, we do better. And so our goal is really to help empower, and we're learning at the same time. So I wouldn't say that any of us consider ourselves on the on the team, perhaps except for Vince, I would put Vince in that expert category, but the rest of us are, we're all learning but we're teaching as we're learning and learning as we're teaching.

**Robin Linkhart 33:49**

That's fascinating. And I love your list of topics. They're they're do so just on the mark and this desire to go deep to not just skim the surface, but kind of intentionally work your way through these various topics. So your goal is to raise the level of awareness and empower people to be and do better. I'm hearing your hope as wanting to impact and effect change, to help us be better communities. So you launched into this new chapter with the diversity team with a team of people that are really dedicated and, and putting a lot of work into this. You had all these presentations, they were delivered online. So how did things unfold? I mean, what, what was it like and, and tell us also about the journey of the Spirit. How the Spirit moved in people's lives, I'm assuming But notice that as you traveled the way together with these really tough topics, topics that in my experience requires us to take a long, deep honest look in the mirror and, and just look inside ourselves. So tell us about the experience of living in this and how the Spirit moved in and out of it.

**Vince Lewis 35:27**

One of the things that I've had the opportunity to experience during our time of presentations and again, because of COVID, I, we're not out in the congregation in the field. So we are able to have that, as we call it, the Latter-day Chats that are just Saints Chats, or whatever in the lobby talk, and the talk over our potlucks, after our services and things like that. But periodically, I have an occasion to be in zoom meetings with different topics with other of our church members. Or if for some reason or another, we have we across the path or a person will purposely contact me to let me know that they had an aha moment. In that four years, someone would say, "I have been saying this, that or what I did not recognize how offensive that could be perceived. I don't really want to offend anyone. But I when you when you said that and I thought of myself and what I've been seeing, I was ashamed. And I just wanted to know that I was you woke me up. And I was made aware". And I've heard that more times than I could count from people in and interestingly enough, people often say that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Well, some of the people that have been telling you that have been are elderly people, and who have been doing it for years and years. And some people that are telling me that our people who grew up with it, their relatives and their, their, their their father, their mother, their uncles, everyone has been using certain terms, and calling people various things for years and years and years. And they thought it was just common, they didn't see as offensive, but they were made aware that it is very offensive. And that we cannot have, we cannot create a welcoming congregation, when we were tossing up roadblock sites, those type of unknown biased statements, that can be very turnoff ish to people and close the door on the welcoming congregation that we want to create. So I have I have enjoyed experiencing that. And I know there's more out there, I'm looking forward to when we can actually rub shoulders with our brothers and sisters. And I can actually answer more personal questions from our brothers and sisters, from what we have stated, I have been pleased that we've had a pretty consistent number of people who have tuned in to our zoom meetings, which tells me that people are getting something from them. So I'm very pleased about that. The other thing in regards to the question that I forgot to mention earlier, is that one of our goals, specifically my goals, especially, is that I believe that



our church and our affiliation is a very, very loving. And when you're talking about Community of Christ, it's in the name. And it's in our mission. It's in our in our enduring principles. It's in everything that we write everything that we sing about everything that we preach about. Zion, the welcoming of anyone and everyone, being a welcoming people. But I'm not sure that all of the saints, know how that looks. I'm not sure that all of the saints know how to do that. And we are, our goal is not to to browbeat someone into submission. Our goal is simply to inform them. The doctrine as the church has written that the doctrine as the Bible has stated, the doctrine of Jesus as it's lifted out. And as we as brothers and sisters of Christ, as members of the Community of Christ are called to live out in our lives, so that all of our brothers and sisters will feel loved and welcomed and not marginalized at all.

**Robin Linkhart 39:46**

Beautiful, Kris?

**Kris Judd 39:49**

Yeah. How has that how have I witnessed the spirit at work in the midst of this, this journey, one of the things the element of all of presentations thus far has been the sharing of information. And our presenters have been creative in the way they've done that using videos and music. And as well as you know, sharing it through Scripture and research. And then we have used the small breakout rooms with zoom that feature for there to be a focus question for people to share around. And we've had our team members as members of, you know, each of those breakout rooms so that they can help guide or record or report back. And so what I'm beginning to see, deepening among this group of people, I don't know, 30-35 people that continue to show up for these monthly presentations is a growing trust of sharing, vulnerable and deep things, attitudes, feelings, things that as Vince was saying, those aha moments and being invited to, to think, Okay, so what do we do with that? How do we translate this knowledge into our communities? And so they're feeling the leading of the spirit to say, Okay, this works for us. We're learning. But what do we do with that? And I think it's, you know, it's easier for people in the cities, you know, where we have some diversity, although, moving from Kansas City to Des Moines, I miss the level of diversity that I was, that I was used to. But we've got folks from rural Iowa, who are saying, "I don't know any people of color in the little in the town that I'm living in, or I don't have access to people whose lives are so different than my own. And and how can you help us? You know, how can we have access?" And so there's this yearning, they want to engage and we don't have an easy answer for them. But the answer, I guess, for, regardless of who the other is, is to somehow find a way to interact and to develop a relationship, not to not to march in and say, "Hey, I'm trying to learn everything I can about being anti racist, why don't you teach me?" but to be in relationship, and to seek to learn by doing, and by being with. So I've seen the deepening of the relationship among members in the mission center, seeing him showing up, you know, we in Community of Christ, we're, we do we want to learn, we want to be better. And I just want to share a little story of something that happened in the book group. And like I said, they were all church members in the book group. And Sue invited a Black man that she used to work with that lives out in Washington, DC, he he has his own faith affiliation, church affiliation. But we invited him in as a guest. And he returned and was a guest with Vince and another one of our

conversations. But Jay, he opened himself up, he shared his story. And he took questions. And he was blown away by the fact that a group of 30 what like, as he said, old white people, as he which offended me that I was old, but that these 30 people showed up, not because they had to attend a diversity training, which is part of the work that he does. Nobody was paying them to be there, there was no work expected, expected, this was an evening of their own time, and that they had been showing up week after week. He could not get over it. In fact, he told his friends about this group of older white people who want to learn how to be better how to do better. And I think in Community of Christ, that's where most of us are. We don't necessarily know what the avenues are to get there. But I it's just a reminder to me of not that we're better than other people, but there is something deep within our DNA. And maybe it is that dream of Zion. Maybe it is that desire, the end of the way we live out our Enduring Principles. But there is a uniqueness about us that to the rest of the world could look very, very special. Like, who are these people and why are they showing up? Why are they listening to a podcast about this? When they're not getting paid? There's no incentive except they love God. They want to be a disciple of Jesus, and they want to live into a world that can be transformed.

**Robin Linkhart 45:08**

Thank you so much, both of you for those little windows and two moments of inspiration and transformation and real life stories of people. So what was the most challenging thing? Do you think about this endeavor, something that maybe felt pretty difficult?

**Vince Lewis 45:33**

I think for myself, the timing, and as I mentioned earlier, a year prior to us beginning, I made an effort to begin something in our mission center. And the most difficult thing for me is that it got off base and and got going well, because of a horrific event. And it, it was a very horrific event. But it perpetuated people into action. And as you had mentioned earlier, and as Kris had mentioned earlier, that we have 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of people throughout the United States in the world, that's that went into action. And when just a year prior to that, when we made an effort to when I made an effort to begin and ask congregations to respond, no one felt the need to respond. And people told me, why do we need to go to a class and learn how when it's clearly written right here in front of us and see, it says it right here in the church, the church mission in the church's Enduring, Enduring Principles. But yet, again, we're, we're reading it, we're thinking about it. But we're not necessarily living it and people were having, having a hard time accepting the fact that we were not exactly implementing it to its fullest degree. So the most challenging thing was the reason, the reason and the way that it started, because there was some emotions associated with that. But I do appreciate the people who agreed to participate in the educational process. And I do appreciate the people who have agreed to learn and still agree to learn. And as Kris mentioned earlier, we're just anxiously waiting to see if people will take it into their congregations and actually live what they've learned, and begin that spreading that, that those methodologies and those things and the new learning within their congregations.

**Robin Linkhart** 47:50

How about you, Kris?

**Kris Judd** 47:52

I think for me, the challenge it with this kind of work, my own personal challenge, and I would say I'm guessing it happens for most people, is just the sustainability of attention. And intention, you know, Vince was saying that, that this liftoff of this dream of the of this team in this kind of work, you know, was, the liftoff happened because of a horrific event that captured our attention and broke our hearts. And I think as human beings, we are much more likely to react to a crisis than we are to sustain the discipline of change. when things calm down, I think that's just our human nature. We're often distracted by the next thing that happens. And yet, this kind of work that we're talking about, and we have focused primarily on the issues of racial diversity and and the issues facing people of color in our country in this country. But we have so many others areas of diversity to explore and to expand upon. But we we've started with our focus in this area, because it was right in our face, and it needed to be addressed. So I would say the sustainability, keeping people engaged and interested in involved, especially when has been missing, we're not able to be physically engaged. We're doing it all on screen, which has its own issues. But that would be what I think would be the most challenging.

**Robin Linkhart** 49:40

So how about the surprises? What did you encounter that surprised you? Or you didn't expect? Kris, you want to start with this one?

**Kris Judd** 49:49

Yeah I do, because having worked at headquarters and being around people with you know, great expertise And excellent presentation skills and you know that just people have quality quality leaders. And I was saying something to Vince about this earlier that what has been so surprising to me pleasantly so is that, as I mentioned, we've just got ordinary folks that, that don't work for the church, but are committed to the mission of Christ committed to the church, doing their best in doing make creating presentations and investing themselves. These are not professional speakers. And yet, they are doing quality work. And, and I guess, for me, that's really encouraging, because I think I, you know, I'll be guilty of saying, like, with the book club, I wanted the author, I wanted the author of the book to talk to us. And since she offered, I took her up on it. And sometimes we're waiting until we have access to that, that number one expert, or, you know, a person, a special person in leadership, or, or maybe someone whose name will be a big draw, when in reality, we can learn this as ordinary, average people, we can learn if we have the passion and the desire and the support. And I find that really empowering and exciting and in a very pleasant surprise.

**Robin Linkhart** 51:27

And how about you, Vince?

**Vince Lewis 51:32**

Well, there are several things. First of all, what comes to mind, and reference to what Kris was saying about the team. And we'll mention in there being standing up and being involved in raising their voice, and recognizing that there are many people, and when has come to surprise me and pleases me a great deal is that many people are recognizing that they have a voice. And they recognize that their voice has been silent for a long time. And they recognize that, as Dr. Martin Luther King stated that at the end, it will not surprise us of the negativity that we received from those who despise us. But it will surprise us by the silence that we have heard from those who are to be our allies. And that silence is deafening. And I think people recognize that they have been silent for too long. And I am pleased and surprised about the number of people who have raised their voice and gotten up off their seat and marched have been active and are still seeking additional ways to become becoming active. I mentioned in a lesson that we had about a week ago about an experience that I had, just recently on the sixth when we had the insurrection at the Capitol and incident that I had here locally, with our local Texas Roadhouse about with a person that was appeared to be could have been involved in the insurrection at the Capitol, that type of person. And I had been convinced to mention that during one of our lessons, and I personally was surprised about other responses that I've gotten from a significant number of people who I who surprise me that typically would not have stated anything in regards to Sorry about that, how that happened to you that should not have happened, and, and so forth. So the level of awareness to participation, and getting involved and stop being silent, has surprised me, I pleased me a great deal as well. And if we can enhance that, I will be we all will be super surprised. What I would like to do also is that nationwide, we've had a lot of very articulate, meaningful, passionate young voices that have stood up and made themselves known and had marched and have made their argument and doing all the right things. We look at the people that are doing the right things. And I'm pleased because I'm tired. And I am I am looking forward to young voices taking charge and continuing to lead the march.

**Robin Linkhart 54:36**

We can all clap for that. So I'm thinking as people listen to us talk today and to your story that folks are thinking, how can we do something like this in my mission center in my community, in my neighborhood? So Vince and Kris, I want to move into asking you what might be some principles or maybe some guiding questions, a couple tips that you could share to help folks begin to explore possibilities and maybe something that you wish you'd known before you started that somebody else might learn from?

**Kris Judd 55:18**

Well, I'll start, you know, I think, I think a track like a book, where people can read and discuss is a good beginning. I know when, back in May, and June, lots of book clubs were getting started all over the place. And, and somebody had made a comment about "Oh, yeah, that's what all the privileged people do when there's a problem is they start a book club." And I felt kind of like a little slap in my face, even though it wasn't directed at me. But I recognized Yeah, there is that is only one level of awareness. But that isn't necessarily going to change behavior. It's really I think about engaging in

relationships with others, that that really changes it, just as, like Vince has said, hearing from people in the mission center, comments and support, because he's been willing to be vulnerable and share his story of hurt and pain, and because they love him and respect him, they respond, and that, that that kind of reaction doesn't come from a book that comes from a relationship. But I do think that perhaps starting with a book, could be a safe way to begin having conversations or some structure, there's a little bit of detachment, so that it's the author is saying versus, you know, I, Kris Judd, or, you know, Vince Lewis is saying, but regardless of what happens, whether it's a book group or a discussion group or an engagement, there has to be some guidelines for, for how you're going to behave with each other, how do you make it that a safe place to really share what's happening in your own heart and mind as you're encountering ideas, as you're looking at yourself and doing that inner work of acknowledging those places that are not whole of repenting of, and making amends if and where necessary, and of committing to change. And so whether that is, you know, having some guidelines on, you know, in this group, this is what we do to make it safe, you know, and there's some great resources out there on how to do that. Inviting the voices of those who've experienced the oppression and the marginalization. So making sure they're making sure not that they're just a guest, but that they are, we often bring our own education and experience and dismiss the voice of lived experience, out of our own privilege, and we're not even aware that we do that. But But inviting, to be part those voices that need to be heard and always being respectful that we are, we are taking steps on a journey, and and committing to be as supportive as possible to each other as we do this, because it's hard work, and has been says, you know, the people that that have lived this, lived the results of our ignorance, and they're tired, and we can't look to them to teach us we've got to take the mantle on what it means to learn to include to invite to appreciate to accept, to embrace to receive, it's it's our turn to do that hard work.

**Robin Linkhart 58:55**

How about you, Vince?

**Vince Lewis 58:57**

I wouldn't immediately comes to mind is our song, a place at the table. And we not only need to set up at the table for those that have historically been marginalized, currently marginalized, but also listened to them when they are at the table. There have been so many corporations who who believe that by inviting a marginalized person to the table, that they are doing their duty, but they don't recognize that they are undermining that person at the table. They're not listening to they're talking over the person at the table and they're not respecting the value of the person. So whether it's a business table, whether it's our dinner table, whether it's our Pepsi table, or whatever it may be, but inviting people and as Kris has stated that when we establish these relationships that may become a part of us. And the only way that you are going to bridge the gap from the unknown to the known is by the establishment of the relationship, which means that a person may need to go out of their comfort zone. And may you cannot do change by doing the same thing that you always done. And so one may have to step out of the boundaries of their, of their regiment, to place themselves in a situation where they have an opportunity to interact, to know to see, to be with to learn from a different population, therefore begin to bring to

build that relationship both ways. And I would refer us again, and I kind of hesitate doing this because hopefully people are listening to the podcast that are not necessarily yet Community of Christ, but seeking to learn more about Community of Christ, and to be a part because, again, people are asking, how what do I do? Where do I go, we have so many things written in our doctrine, in our our information about what we should do, and we look at things like you are my disciples must be found continuing in the forefront of those organizations, and movements, which recognizes the worth of people that's in our doctrine, and that is in Doctrine and Covenants 151, nine, that's just one of many. And we look at 163. We look at 165, I would encourage our people to read and our own doctrine, and not only to read it, because I think a lot of people boast about it, they've read it, but have you owned it? Is it in your head? Or is it in your heart? If it's in your head, then yes, you can boast about your read every word of it. If it's in the heart, then you may not even read it because you've gotten stuck on a certain phrase of that doctrine. And it's inherent in your heart. And you chew on it and you develop a program, you develop a how to you ask yourself, what does this mean to me? What does this mean to me? How do I do this. And I think that if we truly look at our doctrine, it, it's a roadmap. It says to us in many different ways, how and what we can be doing, as a disciple, to make our Community of Christ congregations and body, all that it is called to be. And that is a really, really great place to start. Because it's clearly written out there.

**Robin Linkhart 1:03:00**

I love what you said Vince about going from our head to our heart. And for our listeners who are beginning to learn more about Community of Christ, we recommend Doctrine and Covenants, and start at the end of the book, and read forward and you will get a sense of our current day scripture and sacred text. So Kris, and Vince, what are your hopes for Community of Christ as we live into the future? Kris?

**Kris Judd 1:03:39**

Well, my hopes for Community of Christ have have very little to do with how we gather or what we do and have more to do with who we become. And I think we're in that process of becoming, becoming a people where our Enduring Principles are truly, truly reflect what we what we do value and who we are. Becoming a people where presentations on diversity and inclusion are redundant because we're living with the gifts and the blessings of diversity inclusion, in fact, maybe we don't have classes on how to but rather, celebrations of I look forward to a time when spiritual formation, but going deeper within and the prayer practices and the and the deep listening to Spirit and to each other and to our own stories. Is is just as natural, as as a worship service. I mean, we'd spend as much time spending time doing those things that it becomes so natural as a part of our individual lives, that when we come together in gatherings, the joy and the depth of love that we have just overflow. And our gatherings become truly times of honoring what God is doing in our midst, and that it's a time of celebrating what God is doing. And not, not sometimes it sometimes to me, church feels like it needs to be a cheerleading session to go out and do good things. And I look forward to the time when, because of our formation individually and communally. Because we are living and breathing those Enduring Principles, and the Mission Initiatives of, of inviting people to Christ and abolishing poverty and ending suffering, which we look at the work that we're doing on this team as being engaged in in our mission. You know, when, when our gatherings



are times of sacrament and celebration, and the cheerleading is you keep going, rather than get started. So that's, that would be my hope. And that could look a million different ways, depending on where you're at, but always, always that, that fellowship together that connection with Jesus Christ, and our awareness of the Holy Spirit in us and in our midst.

**Robin Linkhart** 1:06:32

And Vince, how about you?

**Vince Lewis** 1:06:36

What Come on very briefly, what comes to mind is a statement that I've said frequently over the years as I've done discipline workshops, and as I've talked to students, and talked to my staff, and parents, and my parenting group says, "Say what you mean, mean, what you say, and do what you said you're going to do." And I think that is my hope for us as a people in that our church has said, and our doctrine has said, what it means. And it means what it says. And my hope is that we as people will do what it says, we will do.

**Kris Judd** 1:07:16

Amen.

**Robin Linkhart** 1:07:17

I love that. That's not the first time I've heard Vince share those words. And I was hoping he would share them today because they, they just they always make my heart sing, Vince. So as we prepare to close, Chris and Vince, is there anything else you would like to share with our listeners today? Vince?

**Vince Lewis** 1:07:39

I would say that I think the listeners for tuning in, I hope that they have taken away something from our sharing. I hope you've been stirred and incited to go forth and make a difference. I hope if if anything else, that you will recognize that you have a voice. And there are many people marginalized people in our community in in your community, that do not have a voice. And that because of your voice, and the blessings that you have in your voice. You are called upon to be the voice for those who have a marginalized, a silent or no voice at all. We all can do that. It is an every single one of us to make a difference in our world. And no, no, no difference. No change is too small. No change is too insignificant. We do what we can, where we can we grow where we are. And hopefully everyone will seek their place and find what they can do. And do it in God's name.

**Robin Linkhart** 1:08:56

And Kris, did you have any last comments you wanted to share with us?

**Kris Judd 1:09:00**

Well, I don't know how you can add anything to what Vince has just shared. It's just I will say two things. God delights in each fifth faithful step taken. And we've been told that in recent counsel words of counsel to the church, and so yeah, do what you can it may be you may think it's a small thing. But each of those small things adds up to the kind of change that God is yearning with us for God's creation. And thank you for listening and I like Vince, I'm hopeful that we've shared something that has encouraged you or inspired you or puzzled you or amused you but something that's touched you in a way and and we trust that that Spirit that is at work in you will continue to do that. So thank you for your time and your listening ear.

**Robin Linkhart 1:10:00**

Well, it's been a joy to have both of you with us today. Vince and Kris, and I just want to lift up, something Ben said at the beginning of our interview and remind all of us, diversity competency is a journey, not a destination. And each faithful step, as Kris said, is celebrated by God. So thank you, again, Vince and Chris, for being with us for sharing your stories with us, and giving us such a vision of hope for what can be and of course, a very special thanks to all of our listeners. If you would like to hear more stories about mission, check out our what's brewing series. If you have questions for our guests, just go online to lamona heartland mission center, Google it and the website will come up and you can read all about the diversity team and ways to get in touch with Chris and Ben's. This is your host, Robin Linkhart. And you are listening to Project Zion Podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Bye Bye.

**Josh Mangelson 1:11:24**

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