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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.

Carla Long 00:34

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long, and I am so excited to be here with a new and possibly old friend of mine, we might have met earlier. He's going to be talking about GROW for the What's Brewing series, and the What's Brewing series is all about mission that is happening out in the field, and I'm super excited to hear about it. So, Woody, hello, welcome. (Hey, thank you, Carla.) Woody, yeah, good to see you. Um, Woody tell us a little bit about yourself?

Art Woodcock 01:03

Okay. I go to the West Des Moines congregation, I graduated from Graceland in 1978. Went on to graduate school. Worked for John Deere for 34 years. Have a great wife, Becky, three sons, and now three grandchildren, a brand new, and just two weeks old.

Carla Long 01:23

Oh, how beautiful. Oh, new babies are such a blessing and so exhausting, all at the same time. (That's what his parents tell me.) My newest advice to new parents is really just the first three months really just survive. That's my new, that's my best advice for the first three months, just survive. That's all you need to do.

Art Woodcock 01:46

I agree and have the grandparents over to help.

Carla Long 01:48

Oh my gosh, yes. Hand the baby to the grandparents and then go nap. That's my second best advice for sure. (Exactly.) So, Woody, you're here to talk about GROW and I don't even know exactly what GROW is. So what is GROW?

Art Woodcock 02:03

GROW is, is really an organized process for enabling congregations to execute on mission. So it's a series of steps that go, that help a congregation coordinate their efforts, keep, stay focused, and to really take action on mission. So many times we have, we're talking about what our theology is, what this is, is really acting on our theology and putting into practice.

Carla Long 02:32

Oh, that sounds interesting, because I personally love talking theology, but I also love the action part of it. So I, I, this might be something I could really, really jump behind. So, I, I'm excited to get into some

nitty gritty details. So, this might sound like a weird question, but I, I think you're going to be okay with it. So why is GROW?

Art Woodcock 02:52

Well GROW's, that's, that's a, that's a great question because GROW is really focused on helping us do mission. Christ's mission is our mission. And we all, most everybody buys that and believes it. But then what do you do with it? How do you get started? What's the action plan? So that's what GROW, why GROW, is to enable congregations and individuals to act on mission. And it's a, it's a system where allows us to include all our members, and all are, and a great tool for invitation to bring people together to work on mission. Typically, we focus on Mission Initiatives, which are, you know, so broad and so far reaching. What GROW is trying to do is say, Let's take some small bites. Let's take one step at a time, make progress towards those broad mission initiatives and help bring people along, enable them to participate in that process.

Carla Long 04:00

I, I totally agree. So like our Mission Initiatives, Invite People to Christ. Well, that's cool. But do I just go up to someone and tap them on the shoulder and say, Hey, I'd like to meet you, like, for you to meet my friend Christ. No. So we do need and, and I think they're broad for a reason. I think that's important. That, that helps to kind of frame who we are and where we're going. But you're right, in order to make it palatable and doable for people, we have to figure out a way to make it, to make that happen. So, and that's what GROW is. GROW actually takes the Mission Initiatives or bigger goals of the church and makes it easy for people to actually do something. So, is that how it works?

Art Woodcock 04:42

Exactly. We'll, maybe dive into what GROW is here in a second. But, you know, one of the things in terms of invitation, particularly, I don't know if, my kids are all in their 20s and 30s now, they're not really interested in listening to a sermon, but they're really interested in doing things. And helping people in the community, helping people in the congregation, helping people in the world. They, they don't want to talk, they want to do something. And GROW is a repeatable process. It's important to keep that in mind. It's, it's not a one time thing that, within our congregation, we've done 27 GROW projects, I believe. So, it's, it's a repeatable process, allows you to keep going and focusing on different, different objectives within your congregation, community or as individuals within the congregation.

Carla Long 05:42

Oh, well, I think that you have made everyone listening to this very, very curious. So let's jump in. So tell me more about what it actually is.

Art Woodcock 05:51

So GROW is, is, I said it's a repeatable process. But to make it work, there's really five essential ingredients. And those five essential ingredients are really important, because if you follow this recipe, I think you'll like what you end up with. If you don't follow the recipe, who knows. So I'll give some examples. I can tell you, sometimes it doesn't work out. But the first thing is, is to think about what's needed in your community, or in your congregation, or in the world. And it's sort of a, it goes through a cycle. The first step is sort of a plan, do, report, and celebrate. So plan, what are you going to do. Start

doing it. Report and measure it, which is really important, because, you know, you got to keep track of where you are. And then you sort of repeat that each week that you've planned to do something, you do stuff, you report it, do stuff, report it. And then the final step of that is to celebrate, to recognize the progress and to see where you've gone. So that's sort of the step one. Step two as, as you start that is have a written goal. And, you know, in the world, everybody's talking about smart goals. But they're specific, measurable, aligned, realistic, and timetabled. And every, it's been proven that if you write down goals, it is so valuable. First, it clarifies your own personal thinking or your team's thinking about what are you trying to accomplish. Also, a written goal then allows you to communicate that to others in the congregation. So you're all pulling the same direction versus all trying to do something a little bit different. A written goal helps clarify where you're headed. So that's sort of step two. Step three is to have a leadership team that keeps this roll, rolling. And I usually suggest three people. We have a team leader, who's really responsible for seeing the progress of we're working forward, sort of fills in if something's missing to help going forward on the goal. We have someone who's in charge of reporting and communications. So reporting is keeping track of how you're progressing. I'll give some examples later, perhaps to help clarify that. So report where you are. And then, and then to communicate that with everyone. Each week on successful projects reporting back to the congregation, how much progress have we made so far this week? Where do we stand in terms of the goal, and oftentimes, you'll exceed the goal and celebrate and then crush the goal and celebrate later. And the third person is really kind of that celebration person. They're, they're recognizing people for their contributions along the way, and also planning a celebration of success when they get to the end. So those are, so now we got plan, do, report, and celebrate. We've got a written goal. We've got three people in charge of all this, know what they're doing. Where these end up different than some of our goals is we're suggesting 30 to 90 days. So rather than having a, a five year goal, that's great to have, but it sure does get exhausting. So why not break that goal up into pieces? And what are we going to, how far are we can we get the next 30 or 90 days, because that you contain, you can maintain focus, you contain momentum. And in today's world, everybody wants immediate results. So this helps provide a more immediate result, taking that next step to the higher level. And then the final thing that is really odd is a lot of people hate goals because they're almost always unaccomplishable. So Abolish Poverty and End Suffering. That's a great objective, and certainly one we should be working towards, but if you think about it, you finally throw your hands up and give up. We're saying when you write the goal is to write it such that you have a new 90% chance of success. And we found that's really hard because people always want to stretch. Make it a little more, a little more. But we found that if you make it 90% confidence, you can make it happen. People will make it happen. But they won't quit. They'll keep going. Because it's not just like you get to the end of the goal and go, Oh, we made it. And we quit. People love to crush goals. And that 90% success helps people get motivated and carry forward. So those five, five ingredients are really important. Our former Mission President, Vince Lewis, gave a great example of this. And Vince always said this, these five essential ingredients are kind of like making a cookie, and he liked oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. But if you leave the oatmeal out, it's really not the same cookie is it? Or if you leave the oatmeal and chocolate chips out, you get something different. And we found if you follow those five steps, it's very successful. If you don't you run the risk of not ending up with chocolate chip cookies.

Carla Long 11:11

So, Woody, I gotta tell you this sounds super easy, but also a little bit difficult because for those reasons that you mentioned. Well, first of all, people who are not used to it, hate evaluating, hate looking back and, like, sitting down and being, like, this is what we did, did, did. But after those 30 days, you realize how far you've completely come you forget where you were 30 days ago. And then when you look 30, I mean, it's all of those little successes, I think you're right, adds up to making people want to do more and say, Hey, look, look at where we've come from, we can do this even more. So, evaluation has, I think in Community of Christ, I think we've always been pretty bad at evaluation, actually. And it's, I think it's something we need to improve. I think that is a key element to what you're saying. And also I love like the short term goal idea. I mean, because, and, and making sure it's a goal you can actually reach. I mean, we are really optimistic people in a lot of ways, like, I'll do this, I'll do this, I'll do this. And then when it comes down to it, you don't really do.

Art Woodcock 12:19

Yeah, I really like it, because it allows everybody in the congregation and friends to be involved. So many programs are really focused on leadership, which is excellent, we need those. But I think this is really every member can participate, every, our friends can participate, our, it's allows you for that outreach within the community, and getting more people involved. Everybody can contribute, you don't have to be a pastor to do this. It's everybody that makes a difference.

Carla Long 13:00

I love that so much because I do feel like people take ownership when they can contribute. And they feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves, which we all want to be a part of. And there's just so many times in our life, and we just don't know how to do that. So if we're giving people who don't normally have the opportunity, the opportunity to give back, that is a huge, huge blessing.

Art Woodcock 13:26

Yeah, and having that written goal and being specific about it helps the focus, you know, examples I have, one, one example maybe make, it'll help clarify this. Several years ago, we wanted to raise some money for Outreach International at Christmas time. So at the pulpit, I said, you know, we'd like to raise some money for Habitat, or excuse me for, for Outreach International. And they said, Okay, and, you know, we were very fortunate. We got \$500. So several years later, once we had GROW implemented, we wrote a little goal around this. And it was to abolish poverty and to end suffering collect over \$625 for Outreach International, to buy chickens. So we wanted to make it more concrete, not just dollars, but as you know, at Outreach International a chicken costs so much money, so we're going to buy so many chickens. So each week we did this, we had one of our members actually dress up in a chicken suit, and he would come up at the beginning of the service, and he, he'd go "Bok, bok, bok, bok" and then he'd give us fun facts about chickens, how chickens, you know the protein and an egg. How many eggs a chicken lays per year, the amount of meat and healthy meat you get from chickens. And it was really, you know, you can make these a lot of fun. And people really have some keen imaginations out there. So, by the time we got done, I think that was about a 60-day goal, we collected \$2,150. So, from \$500 and saying, Hey, let's do something, their goal is 625, to actually accomplishing 2150. I think that shows you some of the power of having a process in place, having follow up, having reporting, and also making it fun.

Carla Long 15:36

I totally agree. That's really cool. I also think one of the beautiful things about GROW is that sometimes our attention is like all over the place. It's like, we need to do this, we need to do this, we need to do this, this and this, but GROW kind of focuses that attention. So, like, you take 60 days and you do something. And then you can look back and say, Hey, I did something, instead of having your attention everywhere else, and not doing anything at all. So I love that you make a goal and you go for it. And then you say, Look what we did. Let's try something else. I think that's just brilliant.

Art Woodcock 16:13

Yeah, it just takes, if you follow that process, and I think that weekly feedback is so critical, and having, having someone dress up in a chicken suit and then we did the chicken dance to celebrate once we were done with the goal. So, you know, those are kinds of fun things that can happen, you know, and that's a good example of where we're reaching out into the world community and trying to make a difference. Maybe a quick example, you know, so what can we do locally? Well, the first thing you need to do is identify a need. And we had several of our members who volunteered at the food bank here in Des Moines, Iowa. And so they, they asked about what, what, what can you, what kind of items do we have that you're short of. So they, they made the list and brought it back to the congregation. So we quickly concocted a goal. And we said to collect an average of 40-plus items per week for the Des Moines Food Bank, plus donate over \$200 in freewill offerings, and have more than 40 individuals giving. So it's kind of a compound goal, but what we wanted to do there was to say, How many items do we want to collect per week? We wanted to say, How much money do we want to collect for those who want to just give cash or, or a gift of sorts. And we also wanted to have 40 people doing it. We didn't want to have two people doing all this. We wanted to spread it out in the congregation and invite friends to participate. Ask your neighbors for donations, tell them what we're up to. And I think that one ran about six weeks. And it, we blew away that goal because we ended up averaging over 90 items per week. We ended up with over \$700 cash collected freewill offerings. And I think most importantly, we had over 50 people participating in that goal. So it was broad, it reached out within the community, reached out to our members and accomplished what was really needed in our local community.

Carla Long 18:27

That is so beautiful. I love hearing that. And, and I know you said you had 27 different GROW activities in your congregation. That's, that's incredible. Can we hear more about those? Can we hear or some other girl activities that you've been a part of?

Art Woodcock 18:44

Well, you know, sometimes we want to develop disciples to serve. That, that was one of our Mission Initiatives, I believe. So what, we said, What can we do from an educational standpoint, in terms of understanding what we're about? One of those goals was to have, here, I'll just read the goal here. Have 40 plus friends and members read the Doctrine and Covenants 156 through 165 during the next six weeks. So, the objective, someone brought this forward, they said, You know, we, we ought to, we ought to take time to examine our most recent revelations, since they're most, most pointed to where we are today as a, as a denomination, and to study those. So we, we got rolling. I actually teach the adult class, so guess what we studied: Doctrine and Covenants 156 through 165. And during that

period we finished the goal. We had over 46 readers. So our goal was 40. We ended up with 46. And I argued about 40. I thought that was, the 90% success, I said, I don't know, to get 40 people to read those. It sounds really simple, but it's not. And sure enough, we got 46. So, to me, if I'd rewritten that goal, it made it 35 or 30 people, and then crushed it. But they were bound and determined to have 40-plus, so we did. And we, we eeked it out at 46. So, it gives you an example of where the first goal I shared was talking about how we work with the world. The second was how we can serve our local community and the needs within it. And the third is really developing disciples to serve to study the Scriptures, and to prepare ourselves for future service in our mission.

Carla Long 20:48

Woody, I just have to tell you, I, it just blows my mind when you talk about these goals because they do just seem so simple. And so quote, unquote, easy. But I mean, I don't know if I could get 40 people to read those scriptures, you know, in a six-week period of time, I don't know if I could, and once you reach that, it just feels like the success will take you different places. So, I, I really don't think I can emphasize enough to myself and to the listeners, having those goals that you can, 90% of the time, you can meet. Have you ever had a goal that you didn't meet?

Art Woodcock 21:29

Oh, yeah. I can't remember exactly because the team didn't want to write a goal. They said, you know, we're, they wanted to work on something. But they really, they didn't really want to write a goal. And so they, they went about it. And you can imagine what the floundering that then took place. And because they didn't have a goal, they didn't have anything to measure. And because they had nothing to measure, they had nothing to report. And the frustration sat in. And after six weeks, we moved on to something else. And we, we, we've seen that happen before. Within the Lamoni Heartland Mission Center, we've had well over 100 goals from various congregations accomplished. We've had some in Cedar Valley as well. We've done one mission center goal for fundraising last year. That was one, that was our first one to do it mission center wide. So it can work in the congregation. It can also work mission center wide as well.

Carla Long 22:45

Oh, that's very cool. That's very cool. So I, you've talked a little bit about this person, but I want to talk a little bit more about this person, because I think I would be this person. Can we talk a little bit about the celebration that you have after you meet the goal? Are they small celebrations? Are they potlucks? Are they with cake? Or what? How do you celebrate these?

Art Woodcock 23:03

It, it, it varies all over the board. But one, one of the, one of the most common things I heard from some small congregations is, Well, we don't have a budget to have a celebration. And I said, Well, who said it costs anything to celebrate? So, there's been a variety, you know, with the chicken dance, I gave the example of that. We've had potlucks to celebrate the success. We've done, we've had skits to celebrate the success. We had one based off Star Wars. And there was a number of prayers that could be offered for people. And then we had little, a plaque up with all the stars because it's, it's really important to keep things at the forefront. So everybody knows what's transpiring. What are we working on and how are we progressing is, is really important. And, you know, that, that's where your team comes in,

that, that, it's like you said, it sounds so easy, but you have to keep moving. And you have to keep it communicated. And we're working on a GROW goal right now to provide supplies for our local school because they found out that the elementary which was just a block from our church was run, some of the kids were running out of supplies towards the end of the school year. Well, you know, we're not meeting in person, so we're doing this all, all online. And I was very nervous. But we're going through the end of April and we're already well above our goal of, of number of people participating, number of items we're donating. And so it's, it's been working online as well. It's really because we've got great team members on that one. They're doing a fantastic job.

Carla Long 24:49

Oh, so it's, is it different team members every single time?

Art Woodcock 24:53

Usually, that's, at least that's one of the things that I would strive for. You know, I think you need to find team members who have a passion for the goal? You know, quite frankly, there are some goals that are going to, the congregation may work on, you're just not that excited about. And I think we have to give our permission, permission to ourselves to say, You know, I'm gonna sit this one out. I don't have to do every goal. I might participate in some minor way, but I don't have to be deeply involved each time. That also helps prepare people for leadership roles. It's a great training tool to bring new people on board to see exactly what kind of skills and, and what's required in a leadership position, if you're on that team to make things happen. And, you know, it builds confidence as you exceed these goals, and prepares them for their next opportunity.

Carla Long 25:51

Well, absolutely. Gosh, you know, even as I hear you talking about this, and I think about my congregation, I'm filled with a little bit of fear. You know, like, what if nobody gets behind this? What if we fail? You know, like, how do you kind of deal with that fear of maybe people won't want to do this after all?

Art Woodcock 26:13

What, I think there's a couple elements you want to do is, you, you want to vet your ideas before you start jumping into a goal. It, it can't be Carla's goal. It needs to be the congregation's goal. And you don't have to have everybody on board. But I think you have to look at what's needed and get some ideas from folks and see what they're excited about and what's needed in the community or the congregation and then start building from there. The other thing, I think, should give you some confidence, as you start to wade into this is the fact that when you're writing the goal, remember, you want 90% chance of success. We're not going to abolish poverty and end suffering tomorrow. But you know what? We can, we can, we can end suffering for someone tomorrow in our community. We can, we can help with poverty on a limited basis for a handful of people. Those things we can do. So rather than trying to swallow the elephant, let's just, let's just take a bite or two and see what we could do to make a difference there as we, as we go forward. Does that make you feel better?

Carla Long 27:26

It does make me feel a little bit better, except for that whole eating of the elephant deal? I don't know if I can handle that. (Yeah, well, you can pick your creature. Or your plant.) That's right, you can pick your creature or your plant. (That's right.) Uh, well, this, this sounds really exciting. And like I said before, this is not new information. Right? This is nothing new that people have never heard of before. This is not new. But it does feel a little bit groundbreaking in the fact that just for the reasons that you said, so I'm really excited about this, Woody. I think this sounds really cool.

Art Woodcock 28:01

Yeah, I think, you know, the, the, Jim Atkinson was, is a high priest in our, in our mission center. He's the one that really got, kind of got rolling on this. And you can feel his influence. He's a master process pro by training. And, again, if people say, Well, that's business stuff, getting involved with the church. Well, there's nothing wrong with having some processes involved to help us in our mission. You know, what, which is, is, is more sad is if we don't do something like this and we have all the good intentions in the world, but never do anything. So we might have the right orthodoxy, but without some orthopraxy, it's kind of hard to tell. So we, we have, the Mission Initiatives, to me, really set the direction. People say, Where do we, where do we, what should we do? What does God want us to do? I said, Well, start with the Mission Initiatives; might even read the Bible. And you might get an idea there. It's a novel idea. Last I checked, there's so many things we can do. The trick is to narrow down to what are we going to do and get going on it. And I think that's where GROW provides, sort of, that foundation and the confidence required to actually take action on a whole host of things you could be doing. Pick one, and get going on it.

Carla Long 29:26

Oh, that just sounds, it just sounds so exciting, Woody. Thanks so much for talking about that. Um, I do want to mention to our listeners that if you want more information on GROW, you can look at the website, allthingsarespiritual.org and there's some, there's some stuff on there that you can check out. Also, I'm sure that you can email me and I can pass it on to Woody if you want to. So, if you want, need some, if you need some, just a little bit more guidance on how to do it.

Art Woodcock 29:57

I'd be, I'd be more than glad to visit with folks and help talk about a little more, give a little more depth. No, I think that you just reading it online is one thing, but actually taking action and having some perspective and some support because, like you said, Carla, it takes that confidence to get rolling. And when you write that goal, all of a sudden, it's a commitment. And, you know, I, I find it interesting. I like writing goals, I find it really interesting. But a lot of people just hate the writing of the goal. And if you need some help, there's probably someone in your congregation who really has that skill in place, and to get rolling on it. And we've had big congregations, we've had small congregations. We've had, folks, Pat Reeves, over in Cedar Valley has been doing some GROW projects. We also have in Eastern Canada, they have been involved with GROW. We've met with those and they're off on their own doing a variety of GROW projects. So, it's not like it just happened in one congregation or in one Mission Center. This is, we're hoping that it will, GROW will truly grow within our community.

Carla Long 31:12

I hope so too. I don't see any reason why it shouldn't, especially after people hear this podcast and hear what cool things are happening in Des Moines and in all those places that you just mentioned. (Yep.) So, Woody, was there something else you wanted to talk about when it comes to GROW?

Art Woodcock 31:31

Well, I think the, the one advice I would offer is just get going. It's so hard. We've had congregations ponder months on what, what, what goal should I do? Then they have an idea, but we're just, they just can't get over to do something. And the idea is, it, it doesn't have to be earthshaking. The idea is to take something simple, use the process, develop a process, get confidence in it and you'll find that the next time it's a lot easier. And it's important to me to keep momentum because once you get a GROW goal and you get done, I think it's a mistake, you go, Phew, we're all done. Yippee. Yippee, we're done. Now, what are we going to do? Because there's more to be done. And each time you go through the process, it gets easier and easier. It really does. It's just like a lot of things in life. But it's that first step that, like jumping off the diving board, you got to take the leap, but trust me, it's not that hard. You're not that far off the water. Just jump and get rolling on it. And there's so many things to do. Don't, don't take forever figuring out the perfect goal.

Carla Long 32:54

That's very helpful. I know, I know of like some congregations that I've heard of when they're writing a mission statement or something and the mission statement was something like, We look forward to a time when we can start thinking about becoming Christ in the world. I'm like, No, no, no, no, that's not a mission statement. We look forward to a time when we can think about . . . No, no, no, no, no, that's not a mission statement. It's time to actually do it or choose it and do it.

Art Woodcock 33:21

Yeah. What are we going to do? How are you going to measure it? Make sure it's aligned with our orthodox, our orthodoxy. Have it realistic. And have it short term, 30 to 90 days, and you're often going,

Carla Long 33:35

And you're often going. Oh, that's, that's just so great. So, Woody, thank you so much for sharing your knowledge about GROW with us. It has made me really, really excited. And it's, it's kind of taken my mind into a lot of different places. So, maybe watch out folks in Salt Lake. You might be hearing more about this very soon.

Art Woodcock 33:54

I hoped, I will follow up to make sure of that. (Oh, no, Woody.) Well, there's a, you're on the hook, Carla. (I . . .) The pressure is on. Really it's simple.

Carla Long 34:07

I am so grateful for you and grateful for what has been happening in Des Moines and all over the place. And was there anything else you want to say before we sign off?

Art Woodcock 34:17

Um, just wish everybody best of luck. And remember, Christ's mission's our mission. So let's get going.

Carla Long 34:24

Amen. Thanks a lot, Woody.

Art Woodcock 34:26

Okay, thank you.

Josh Mangelson 34:36

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