

405 | What's Brewing | Stephen Donahoe
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 00:33

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long, and today I have a very dear and wonderful friend on the show, and I'm so excited to introduce Stephen Donahoe to you. Hi, Stephen.

Stephen Donahoe 00:45

Hi, Carla.

Carla Long 00:47

Stephen, thanks so much for being here.

Stephen Donahoe 00:49

I'm so excited to talk with you and all the listeners of the Project Zion Podcast.

Carla Long 00:54

Ah, you're so sweet. Um, so Stephen is going to talk about his job, and how he lives out his job within the mission, within the mission of his life. And I'm really excited to hear about that. You're also listening to the What's Brewing series about how we live our mission out in everyday life. So, Stephen, before you jump into your job, which I know is very important, very cool, I'd love if you'd tell us a little bit about yourself, and just so we can get to know you.

Stephen Donahoe 01:21

Sure, yeah, absolutely. Well, I am a young adult, still, Carla, 35. I'm still going to be called the young adult.

Carla Long 01:31

You're totally in Steven. You're totally in.

Stephen Donahoe 01:34

Okay, excellent, excellent. I'm glad to hear that. I have been, I was raised in the Community of Christ and went to Graceland University, which was a wonderful experience, met some of my bestest friends ever who I've kept in touch with, and then moved to D.C., actually, to work at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, which I'll talk more about. And I love being in Washington. I love my job and really working on some of the issues that I care most about, and that have been core parts of my entire life. And personally, I'm married. My husband is an economics professor, which is great, because I don't understand economics very well. And, yeah, we live here in Washington, D.C.

Carla Long 02:23

Wow, I didn't know he was an economics professor. That sounds super-duper, duper smart.

Stephen Donahoe 02:28

Yes, I just nod and smile.

Carla Long 02:32

Yeah, honey, that sounds really interesting. Thank you for telling me that.

Stephen Donahoe 02:35

Right. Exactly.

Carla Long 02:38

So, you work for the Friends Coalition...

Stephen Donahoe 02:42

Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Carla Long 02:45

Friends Committee on National Legislation. So, tell us about that. I don't even know what that means.

Stephen Donahoe 02:50

Great. Absolutely. Most people don't. So, the Friends Committee on National Legislation or FCNL is a Quaker peace and justice advocacy organization. So, we lobby Congress on issues ranging from ending war, preventing war, climate change, indigenous rights, immigration reform, all kinds of peace and justice issues, actually very in line with the values of the Community of Christ, the values that I grew up with, the issues that I care most about. So, it's been a wonderful journey. Like I said, I came to the Friends Committee on National Legislation right out of Graceland. I was a young fellow, or an intern, for 11 months doing grassroots organizing, and I found that this community of people that were working on these issues had been dedicating their lives to the things that I care most about. And we're making progress in Washington, in Congress, toward a more peaceful and just world. So, for me, that was pretty exciting. And clearly, it's been a wonderful journey for me since then. I'm now 13, almost 13 years later, I'm still working for the Friends Committee on National Legislation. So, you know, it's an interesting mix. I mean, our work really is, one, we do have registered lobbyists who, you know, will take on a portfolio of issues and, you know, for example, nuclear disarmament, you know, we have a lobbyist who works on eliminating nuclear weapons funding, you know, or reducing that, or specific nuclear weapons. And then we have another lobbyist whose focus is immigration, another lobbyist whose focus is climate change. But a big part of our work is actually getting people around the country to take action on these issues, because as much influence as, you know, a lobby peace and justice faith-based lobbyist in Washington, D.C. has, actually, the bigger influence is people around the country talking to their members of Congress and getting to know that, their members of Congress, the staff, and working on these issues on a regular basis and keeping in touch with their members of Congress about issues that they're passionate about. So, it's living that out in our, in communities across the country, is really a big part of the work.

Carla Long 05:17

Have you found, and I don't know if you know anything about this, but have you found in the last couple of years that people have been getting more and more involved? Because I know that I have called my Congress people, like, more in the last five years than I ever have before. Has that been true across the country?

Stephen Donahoe 05:33

Definitely. Yeah, absolutely. There's a resurgence of energy around engagement with Congress and engagement on peace and justice issues as people recognize that these issues are urgent. I mean, we are in a climate crisis right now. We are seeing it. You live in the west, and the fires that are happening right now in Oregon are much worse than they would have been if we hadn't have devastated the earth in our climate catastrophe with our overconsumption of oil, basically, right, and more. But the reality is that people recognize they have to be engaged now. They are called to take action because of the urgent needs they see in their communities. And I think that's very exciting. I mean, I, you know, it's difficult that it's taken crises to make people realize that they need to be actively engaged on peace and justice issues, but the reality is, whatever it takes, we've got to move, right? We've got to, we have got to be engaging folks. And I think the other piece is people see more possibility right now, too. They see that there are some things that can happen in Washington, you know, and I think the Coronavirus has taught us a lot about the role of, the government can play, for better or worse, in terms of impacting every part of our lives and our communities. And the economic recovery packages that have passed in the last, you know, year plus, have been absolutely essential to our well-being as a nation, right? And members of Congress have listened to their constituents about those bills, and we're still working, you know, the next economic recovery package. You know, I'm guessing some listeners across the country right now are getting monthly payments for their children that help with day-to-day expenses, in a way that we never have in this country before. And that is wonderful. That is, that is public policy put into action, in a time when people across the country need that money to help with basic, very basic expenses like medical care, child care, food. These payments are absolutely essential. So, I think there're, folks are waking up and seeing, Wow! Public policy matters, and it has an impact in every person's life, not just in this country, but across the world. When you look at, you know, one of the main issues we work on, is ending and preventing war. Well, you know, war, US war has had tremendous effects across the globe. And you know, you look country by country, you can see ways that even now, look at look at Haiti, look at what's happening in Haiti. Well, the US has had a role over the course of Haitian history in destabilizing that country. So, the things that are happening now in countries across the globe that are really devastating, a lot of those have origins back to Western colonialization, right? So, that's a reality that we need to face and we need to, we need to be engaged positively in living out our values and helping to shape a new world, that Zion community, that is possible, but we have to be engaged in making it happen.

Carla Long 09:27

Oh, Stephen, I can feel your passion. It makes me, it makes me really excited too. You know, I remember thinking, like, 10 years ago, as a middle-class, educated woman, who has a family that is a safety net, who I could always fall back on, I remember thinking, it doesn't matter who is in Congress and it doesn't matter who's in the White House, my life will change very little. Well, that is no longer

true. Like, I have seen very clearly that that is no longer true and that while my life may not change or may change, I have responsibility to do what I can to help those other people and to look outside my little, perfect little world and see what my actions do to either help or hinder other people. So, I have come to this realization just in the last 10 years, and I hope other people are smarter and quicker than I am in that, because we need activists, right?

Stephen Donahoe 10:25

Absolutely, absolutely, and you're not alone in that taking time, right? And we're all coming to that realization over time. And people are on that journey. But we can help inspire people to be involved, right? We can help. And I think the key is helping everyone in the, in the US to know that their voice can make a difference, because, you know, a lot of people care about these issues, you know. They, when you look at the Enduring Principles, you know, we go back to the Worth of All Persons. Well, you know, how can you honor the worth of all people if people literally do not have enough food to eat? How can we, how can their value reach its full potential, if they don't have basic necessities, right? We can do something as a country to help honor the worth of all people. We can honor, going to another Enduring Principle, the Sacredness of Creation. You know, how can we honor God's creation, if literally, it is burning down around us because of the actions of our ancestors and us, in terms of our overconsumption, you know. Well, we can take action. We can actually reduce our carbon output, and change the trajectory, right, of the planet. And I think, you know, there are so many places, pursuit of peace, you know, God's shalom, bringing a sense of peace, and again, coming back to the Zion community, you know, we can help end US participation in war. You know, we can be a part of that. And we can help push for more peaceful methods of solving problems in our communities, in our churches, in our nation, in our Congress, getting people to talk to each other, right? You know, because that's a place where there needs to be a lot of conflict resolution. And then, in our foreign policy, bringing a more peaceful approach to help people know that the US government and Americans, you know, the US government represents us, right? So, you know, Americans are not just our military, or maybe even more concretely, our military contractors, which people see across the world, right. They're seeing actually military equipment that is, you know, part of the defense contract industry, that we are not weapons of war. We are instruments for God's peace. We can be, right? And if we approach the world from that point of view, of actually, how can we help push for healing? How can we help push for a more just, inclusive, peaceful world? Well, there are really specific things that we can do, right? It's not a, you know, this is not just some fuzzy idea, hippie concept, right? That's not what, that's not what peace means to me. To me, peace means actually changing the way we use our tax dollars, right? Instead of \$750 billion going to the Pentagon budget, which has just got passed, right, we could use that money. But what about vaccinating the world? Don't you think that would do more for bringing a more peaceful world, then, you know, more tanks across the globe, you know, in bases around the world, or in our communities here, across the US? So, I really come down to very tangible things that we can do, right, as people in the US, as people in our communities, in our churches, in our congregations, and as citizens of the world, that we can actually take small actions that lead to, help lead to that Zion community.

Carla Long 14:48

You know, it's really good to hear that and I'm going to be asking you about what are some of those tangible things we can actually do, so start thinking about that. But it's really important for me to hear

because there are times when I feel like some serious climate change anxiety within me, things like this and the immigration. Like, I feel my anxiety raise because of these things, and I think I'm just one person. I am just one person trying to make it through. I don't know what I can do. I recycle, but what else can I do to really help? So, what are some of those tangible things that we can do to kind of maybe help even me, kind of, tamper down my anxiety?

Stephen Donahoe 15:31

That's a really good point, Carla, because the reality is that when you start to recognize how many issues are really broken right now, it is, it, and you start to open yourself up to that, that broken heartedness of the world, right, it can feel like you're, you just, you have a broken heart. You get, become paralyzed. And I think, what, so, Parker Palmer is a Quaker writer, and he talks about your heart, your heart breaking and opening up to more possibilities, more love, right? So, it's breaking open, not breaking apart. And I think that's so important, right? So, when we sit, let's talk about immigration for a second. So, you know, when you think about the plight of people who came to this country, their parents brought them here. They're dreamers, you know, they came, when they, their parents brought them when they were very, very young. They have lived without legal status for a long time. Finally, they got legal status under DACA, you know, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. And sorry, but it does break my heart, right, and then yours, you know. And so, a judge just recently said, "No, that's it, that's unconstitutional." So, people who qualify, who didn't get the DACA status before, but are, but qualify, they're not going to get it, now. We have an opportunity, as people in this country, to say, "That is not acceptable. In fact, those people belong in our communities. They should have legal status." And we haven't, we, this is a moment where we can say, "Absolutely not. That is not what we stand for. We believe in the worth of all people, and we are going to take action." And, right now, the, that recovery package, you know, there's another COVID recovery package that's under consideration, and one of the things that your members of Congress are thinking about is whether, and they're deliberating about this right now, will protection for dreamers and a path to citizenship for dreamers, will that be in the legislation or not? They're making that decision right now, and between now and the next several months. So, you can take action and call your members of Congress and say, "Absolutely, my, my heart, my value, values, my God tells me that, that there is value in every single person." And I believe that we have to take action for these people, and with these people, right? It's, this is not a gift. This is, these people have contributed to our communities, right? And we want to stand with them, stand together. And so, that's a very specific moment. Instead of letting our heart get broken, and not taking action, just feeling like, wow, there's nothing I can do, you know, this is terrible, but you know, these decisions are being made outside of my control. Well, actually, we have a lot of influence. And if we take, take that open heart that we have, that we've experienced, and I know that we do in our churches and our communities across the country, folks have an open heart, right? That, this is integral to our worship, right, is opening our heart to hear and to be, to get that continuing revelation, to recognize where God is calling us to take action in the world, in our lives. And this is one of those moments. So, open our hearts and say, "Absolutely. I can hear the stories of people who need to be recognized. They need to, they need to have this legal status, and it will make a huge difference in their lives. And it will make a huge difference in my life." And one thing I think that people of faith have a hard time with, is really owning our role. Members of Congress are very interested in hearing from people of faith, because we're coming from a deeper recognition on these issues, right? We're not coming because, "Oh, this is going to benefit us financially," right? That's not why I care about these issues.

That's not why you care about these issues. We care because our faith calls us to care, right? We care because our hearts have been opened to these people, and that's powerful. I remember going into a lobby visit with a constituent and the staff, we were meeting with a staff member, and we were talking about this small peace building program, right? And the staff member said, you know, we were talking about it for a while, and they were getting like, "Okay, this is important, I get it." And then they said, "But how do you benefit from this?" And, you know, it's like they are used to industry lobbyists coming in and making a financial argument for how they will benefit from this legislation, right? They're used to people coming in and speaking selfishly about how these policies will impact their bottom line. We, that's not where we're coming from as people of faith, right? We're coming from a place of, that's not where you are coming from. You're not working on these issues, or you don't care about this work because, well, you know, if dreamers are a part of this country, they can, you know, contributed to our financial well-being. Sure, that's a great outcome, but that's not, at the end of the day, that's not why we're called to work on these issues. That's not why we were called to advocate for a path to citizenship for dreamers, right? And so, I think that's so powerful. It's, it opens doors that you would not imagine possible, because members of Congress and their staff are humans too, and they are moved by real compassion and empathy. So, that's another thing that I always talk about is, like, we need to recognize that there is, there is that of God in all people, including your senator, right? And so, we need to approach them from that place of love and recognizing their worth as well. Anyway, I said so much there. I hope that was helpful, Carla.

Carla Long 22:36

Actually, that meant a lot to me. I got a little bit emotional while you're talking, not only because I personally know some dreamers from when I lived in northern California, and I love those people, but also, because sometimes when I call my members of Congress and talk to them, and leave messages, or their voicemails are completely full, and they can't accept any more messages, I wonder if what I'm doing is even worth it. Like, I wonder if they're listening. I wonder if they care. I wonder if my voice even matters at all. And what I'm hearing you say is that my voice does matter, and like, it, in fact, it sounds like it might be the only thing that matters in a lot of ways.

Stephen Donahoe 23:15

Yeah, that, that's a really important point, Carla, because it can feel frustrating sometimes, right? You know, you think what happens, you know, when I leave a message, or when I call and don't get through, like, or I send an email, you know, what happens? And what we talk about is being on the ladder of engagement, right? There are, and I think people need to find their place on that, on that way of being engaged, right? Some people, you know, for them, one thing that they can do is go to protests. And that's a really important point. And it helps build public support and momentum on issues. Another, you know, some people protesting is not their, what they can do to serve. And so, you know, they're, they can call their members of Congress. They can take action as advocates. And that's really been the work that I do, in terms of inspiring folks to take action in that way. And for me, it's a process, right? You know, a lot of it is, you know, there's a hierarchy of influence in terms of how we make influence. And that ladder of engagement, you know, the first rung of the ladder is emailing or calling, you know. The top rung of the ladder is actually meeting with your member of Congress, and working to get to know them and their staff, and having influence that way. And, of course, that's a much more influential step. But you have to take the other steps in order to get to that step. And again, you know, when I came to

Washington, D.C. 13 years ago, and you know, if you would have told me, "Oh, you might, you will meet members of Congress and talk to them about issues that matter to you." I would have said, "You know, that's not, you know, that's not gonna happen. That's not who I am. I'm not rich, I'm not powerful, you know, members of Congress don't care what I think." And the reality is that, if you stay engaged, and if you are strategic about your involvement, you can actually build that relationship with your member of Congress. And, you know, I, I've seen this happen for hundreds of people across the country. And, actually, this is an area where the pandemic has made this more possible, because you can meet your members of Congress on Zoom. You don't have to come to Washington to do that. You know, you don't have to go, you know, they also have local offices, congressional offices, and you can meet them there. So, to me, the key is getting on the ladder, right, and taking steps toward deeper engagement. And so, if you're feeling frustrated that they're not getting back to you on the phone, you know, try writing a letter to the editor, which is a wonderful way. So, the number one way to get something you think read by a member of Congress is not actually telling them, it's write it in a letter to the editor and mention their name. So, Carla lives in Utah, right? So, Carl, if Carla, this is going to be very specific, so pathway to citizenship for dreamers, absolutely essential. That is something that Senator Romney also agrees with. But he needs to really step up and push for that, and he could be a difference maker in making that happen. So, if you write a letter to the editor and say, you know, "I care about a pathway to citizenship for dreamers, for these reasons, and I really hope that my senators, that Senator Romney will make this a priority and push for this in the next recovery package," you know, what? Senator Romney is going to read that, which is amazing, right? Like, that's, they care about what's said about them publicly? You know, that's, and I think that's a wonderful, like, very practical thing that you can do. Also, it's a great way to help educate people in the community as well, because then you're starting a conversation with others in your community through the local paper about these issues. And you never know. I mean, of course, you're going to get some pushback, and, you know, somebody's going to write something terrible in response. That's all part of the, that's all part of the process, right? The reality is, you're also going to think about the person who reads that and says, "Wow, I never thought about it that way," you know. "I, my faith also calls me to take action. And I'm gonna, I'm going to call Senator Romney's office," You know, I mean, that's the work, right? That's the way we make a difference is those small moments. It's, it feels like sometimes, you know, what we need is a tidal wave of action. But the reality is that tidal waves happen through those small ripples, building and building and building and building and then all of a sudden, oh, my gosh, there's a moment where the dam breaks, and we can make progress. And really, that is where we are right now in between now and the end of the year, in terms of the potential for that tidal wave of possibility on so many issues because of this recovery legislation that's being considered in Congress, right?

Carla Long 28:53

Stephen, you're very good at this. I feel very inspired. And I never thought about actually writing to the editor. I, I've never even considered that would be a way to do that, because there are times, I know, everyone's gonna be very shocked to hear this, but there are times when even I can get tongue tied and not know exactly what I'm going to say. So, if I can get it down on paper, and send it in, and that's just an email folks. That's just an email to the editor. That's all you need to do. That's really exciting to hear that there is a way, besides always calling and never getting through, and never get, and only getting voicemail, or maybe not getting voicemail, which is very frustrating. It can be really frustrating. So, writing a letter to the editor, that is an awesome suggestion. Thank you. Cool.

Stephen Donahoe 29:37

And mention your member of Congress by name.

Carla Long 29:40

...and mention them by name. Yes. And it also sounds like it's important to mention that you're a person of faith, maybe your church or your, things like that, too. Okay.

Stephen Donahoe 29:50

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Carla Long 29:52

Cool. I'm going to switch gears a little bit because I'm really curious. I know that FCNL has worked with Community of Christ in a lot of different ways, and I would love to hear how Community of Christ and FCNL have worked together.

Stephen Donahoe 30:06

That's a great question. So, I actually came to FCNL's annual meeting or big event, in November of 2008 because, excuse me, 2007, because Andrew Bolton, who is a wonderful mentor of mine, and I'm sure many others, Andrew was a professor at Graceland, and he was teaching a class on world religions. And Andrew said, "You know, Stephen, I really think you should think about going to FCNL's annual meeting, and we'll help find funding and exploring whether the Community of Christ and FCNL could work together more closely. And, you know, I was like, "Okay." Andrew was also an apostle at the time, and, you know, I thought, of course, I would love to do that I would love to go. I hadn't heard about, you know, Quakers really very much, and I didn't really know a lot about advocacy. I was studying Peace Studies at Graceland, and so, I was learning some theoretical pieces, but really the practical side, I hadn't considered very much. And so, I went that November and just, my eyes were opened. So, there, here was a community of people across the country, who had been working on these issues for decades, and who had given their life to peace and justice, and I just thought, "Wow, this is something I want to be a part of". So, I came back to Andrew and I said, "I think we should do it. We should try to find a way to partner together, like, this is amazing there. This is incredible." And of course, FCNL was also really excited about the potential to partner together, as well. And so, we actually had three years of a joint fellowship. So, we had, there were three of us, and Karin Wingard-Manual, myself, and Rachel Cash all worked at FCNL and also worked with both Outreach International and the Community of Christ in a one-year position. And so, it was a wonderful opportunity to help build some of those connections. And so, I would travel, or those of us, I mean, we did, kind of, different work when we were in the fellowship, but one of the things that I would do would be to, as I was traveling, doing grassroots organizing with the Quakers, I would also visit Community of Christ congregations and talk about just the kind of things that I've been talking about today, how people can get involved on these issues. And so, we had, like I said, three years of the fellowship, which was wonderful. Unfortunately, the funding ran out, and so, we didn't continue in that regard, but the partnership is still there. And so, we've had FCNL staff come to Peace Colloquies. We've had FCNL staff, including myself, at World Conference, and we've had booths at Peace Colloquies and things like that. So, it's been a wonderful partnership. And, you know, I think what for me is this, the key is interfaith work

together and ecumenical work together. And I actually serve on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries Team with several others, of course, across the world church and the Community of Christ. And one of the things we're looking at is how can we continue to build these ties with other denominations who care about this work so much, right, and who have different expertise. You know, I think that's the piece for me is, you know, Quakers and others involved with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the FCNL was the first religious lobbying organization. We were started in 1943, and, you know, really, this idea was very new then. And since then, there are a lot more folks who've joined in and having offices in Washington, D.C. But the Community of Christ doesn't have an office in Washington, D.C., but what we can do is work with other denominations that do have a bigger presence in Washington, and help take some of these opportunities for engagement back to our congregations. And I think that's what's so powerful is, you know, we can have an influence through organizations, another is Bread for the World, right? The Community of Christ has had a tremendous partnership with Bread for the World for a long time, and it's very powerful. The Community of Christ has been active with Ecumenical Advocacy Days. And again, here's an opportunity for us to work together as ecumenical and inter-religious groups, and really, we're stronger together, right? We're stronger when we bring our values and our, the issues that we care about most to the table, and our unique identity, and combine it with, okay, well, what is what do the Lutherans think about this? What are Methodists think about this? What do Quakers think? What about Mennonites and Catholics? You know, and we are, we have different, right, there are differences, of course. But there are ways that we can work together on some of the core understandings of Christian teaching. Of course, there are, is a lot of commonality there. There's also commonality with other religions. And, you know, that's so powerful. And you talk about influence. You know, when you get a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim imam and a Community of Christ pastor together, and you meet with your member of Congress, all of a sudden, it's a very different conversation, right? You know, it's one thing to say, "Oh, we care about this, you know, in our community." But it's another thing to say, "Well, this community here, this community here, this community here, we're coming from very different perspectives. But we all believe that, in the worth of all persons, right, in that of God in every person. And we all believe that we need to, for example, take action and protect, provide a pathway to citizenship for dreamers." Now, that is so powerful when we work together in that way. I was just looking up, one of my very favorite things to do in Washington has been this Interfaith Unity Walk. So, if you haven't been to the Washington, D.C. Community of Christ, please visit because it's an incredible space, and we're actually on Massachusetts Avenue, and we are in this path of really cool Christian and other Christian denominations and other churches and religions. And so, it's a path that starts at a synagogue and goes past a Sikh Gurdwara, the D.C. Community of Christ, a Buddhist center, and a Muslim center as well. You know, it's an incredible experience and, you know, Catholic Church. It's just a very, very cool, and it's just, you know, this, I don't know, maybe two-mile walk ending at the Gandhi Memorial. And so, it's a, that for me is a visceral, you know, is, especially it started after 911. And it's a visceral moment of, we're working together. We are walking together as people of faith, coming from very different backgrounds, but with similar concerns, and our faith is calling us to take action and to work together. And that is so powerful, right? That is powerful. And, certainly, you're welcome to do that in Washington, D.C. I think the next one is sometime in September. But you're also, these are things we can do in our communities, too, right? You can get to know the local rabbi. You know, you can get to know someone at the, you know, Catholic, people in the Catholic Church. You can get to know others in your community, local Quakers, and we can build this movement, this tidal wave that we talked about, one ripple at a time. And that ripple can start with you. And that's so exciting to be

part of something bigger than all of us, right? It's bigger than, it is God's shalom, right? This is part of, being a part of God's shalom. So, it's exciting to me.

Carla Long 38:56

It's exciting to me, too. I, you know, I love how, in Community of Christ, we actually think that there's truth in all religions, you know. There is, there's truth out there. And if we get to know a Muslim imam, or a Jewish rabbi, or whatever, we get to see how they see God too. So, that really opens our understanding of who God is, as well. And so, it can only be a good thing to get to know more religious people in your community and other people in your community as well. I've been very lucky in Salt Lake City. I'm part of the Salt Lake City Interfaith Roundtable. I'm also part of a, another group of clergy. I'm also part of the Utah Valley Interfaith and I have been astounded by what I've learned when I go to the, and meet new, with new people. Anyway, it's just been fascinating and exciting and fun, and I feel like, most importantly, I feel like I'm not alone, you know, like, trying to make my way through this jungle all by myself. There's a lot of us trying to make their, our way through and so I hear about more opportunities to serve and more opportunities to help people and that I would have, than I wouldn't have heard about them had I not been a part of this group. So, I'm with you, Stephen, get involved. Meet those religious people. You, you'll be so excited and surprised by it. I know you would. I know. Okay, so my last question for you is all about, I don't know how much you like to talk about it, but it's all about money. So, sometimes, I'm a bishop and Community of Christ, and of course, bishop for us means that I talk about generosity all the time. And sometimes I feel like people are so sick about hearing about generosity and sick about talking about money, but money is an essential way to build this world that we keep talking about here on this podcast. So, how do you see the integration of, like, spirituality and fundraising, and can money, like, heal the world and not just add to its destruction? So, can you talk to me a little bit about that?

Stephen Donahoe 40:57

Well, Carla, you're really hitting on all my favorite conversations so, that's wonderful. I also love to talk about money. So, I do grassroots organizing, but actually, I am the Director of Development at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. So, my job is primarily raising money for peace and justice. And I moved pretty quickly. I was doing grassroots organizing for my first two years at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. And then I realized very quickly that the sense of asking people to take action, like we've been talking about today, in lobbying their members of Congress, using their time to work toward this world we seek, is actually very similar to asking people to use their money to work toward this world we seek, right? These are all ways that we have within our own means that, through the generosity of, grace and generosity of, coming back to that Enduring Principle of Grace and Generosity, we have been blessed to be a blessing, right? And I think that's so powerful. And I actually would, have been reading a really interesting book by Edgar Villanueva, and it's called *Decolonizing Wealth*. It's very interesting, but I just want to read just a quick passage from that. So, "Money is like water. Money can be," well, sorry, excuse. I've actually been reading a really interesting book by Edgar Villanueva. It's called *Decolonizing Wealth*, and I just want to read a quick passage from that. "Money is like water. Water can be precious, life-giving resource. But what happens when water is dammed, or when a water cannon is fired on protesters in sub-zero temperatures? Money should be a tool of love to facilitate relationships to help us thrive, rather than to hurt and divide us. If it's used for sacred life-giving restorative purposes, it can be medicine." And I just love that. So, Edgar Villanueva comes from

an indigenous perspective. And, you know, so, looks at money in this way of, money is medicine. And I think that's so powerful. I just, this is one way that we can use our resources to heal the world. I really believe that and I've seen it so clearly in people across the country. I've seen it in the people I work with. Like I said, I grew up in the Community of Christ. I grew up in a family, we didn't have a lot of resources, but it was always very important to give money to the things we care about, you know, to the church, to tithe, you know, all of that, but also to be involved in local organizations. And I realized, like, that one way we can be involved is supporting this work financially. And for me, like, leveraging our resources, you know, whether that's your time, whether that's your money, whether that's your talent, it is so powerful, because that, like we were talking about before, it's again, contributing to the ripples. And one of the things that has been so wonderful for me is to also see this from a donor side, right? So, also as, again, you know, I don't have a lot of money, but I can give monthly to things that I care about. Even \$10 a month makes a difference in terms of the financial stability of an organization. If they have 1000s of people across the country giving \$10 a month, it has a huge impact. And so, to see that from the inside, you know, I sit in our budget meetings, right? I help craft, you know, those budgets, the spreadsheets, like you, Carla, as a bishop, right? You're, you see that day in and day out and to see the way that our collective energy, right? That's what it is. Money is a form of energy and seeing it come together, in this really powerful way, and being used to further this work for peace and justice is just so powerful. So, I just want to share a couple examples. So, I remember very clearly, what I was doing, I was major gift officer, which sounds very intimidating, right? And this donor in Michigan, they were, I was traveling to Michigan, and every once in a while this person would send \$1,000, you know. And I thought, gosh, this is, you know, that's significant, that for our organization, \$1,000 is a major gift. And it was, just, felt random, you know, and so, I called and I said, "You know, I would love to come and see you. I'd love to hear more about your story, what you care about. And she said, "Okay," you know. So, I drove and drove and drove. It was, kind of, very far drive in Michigan, and I got to her house, and she lived incredibly simply. And I was thinking, "Oh, this person has a lot of money. They must be very wealthy," you know. And no, she didn't have a car. She just had, you know, she grew a lot of her own food. She lived below the poverty line. And what she would do is, anytime she, so she would save up her money, and when she got \$1,000, she would send it to us. And it was just so powerful. I mean, we talk about using our resources. I'm not saying that everybody listening to this needs to give up all your resources, and, you know, give it to the church or to the Friends Committee on National Legislation or anything like that, but what I am saying is that we have an opportunity, right, through our financial means, to make a difference on the things that we've been called to work on, right? We have this burning passion. Our hearts are not broken open. Our hearts are opened and hearing the message, hearing the calling, right, to work on these issues that, hearing the voices of the people that are suffering. So, we have that open heart. And one thing we can do with that open heart is use our financial resources to go, to flow toward the things that need healing. And I just, I think that is so powerful, you know, that this is an opportunity to be part of that tidal wave, right, to be part of that, the Zionite community. And whether it's \$10 a month, or \$1,000, or maybe you have a lot of financial resources, and it's \$100,000 that you can give toward the causes that you care about. But, whatever it is, it is a symbol of your intention, right? It's a symbol of your purpose. It's a symbol of using your resources to heal the world. And for me, that's powerful. I never, you know, if you would have told me when I was 12, you know, I'm going to be, my life's work is going to be fundraising, I would have laughed at you, probably even, even at 20, I would have laughed at you, right? I'm sure Carla would have laughed at the idea of being a bishop, you know. But the reality is that if we can help people

across the country to recognize their role as part of this Zion community, and help them see that we can all join together through our financial resources to create this impact, it's extremely powerful. So, I believe in the spirituality of fundraising. I believe that this is living out our highest intentions, or can be. And I believe that this is part of my purpose in life is to help people put their values into action through their financial support.

Carla Long 49:00

You know, Stephen, I actually think you and I are pretty lucky. I don't know if everybody gets to work in a job where their purpose of their life is their job, and I can tell that you have so much passion for it, and that it truly is your life's mission to make this world a better place for people who might not have the easiest time, and to do what you can, and do everything that you can to talk about it. And I just love hearing about your passion for it.

Stephen Donahoe 49:29

Thanks, Carla. I know that you share it. You share that passion too. So, it's a wonderful opportunity to talk together. And I just wanted, can I just, can I say one more thing?

Carla Long 49:39

Please.

Stephen Donahoe 49:40

I guess, I guess my final thought is, like, let's do this together, right? This is so powerful. We have so many opportunities to use our resources, whether it's our financial resources, our time, our talent, our advocacy, our activism, protesting, whatever it is. Like, this is a collective effort, it, to make the world better. And we can step up, right? We are being called to take action in any number of ways. And whatever that is for you, like, answer the call. Say, "Absolutely, yes! I am here for it. And I'm ready to join this community. And I'm ready to be a part of this change." And I just, I'm excited to be able to say, "Yes," every day, "Yes, I'm here for it. This is part of my call." And I hope everybody gets that opportunity, right? As you said, Carla, like this is, what a blessing to do this work. And it's not a blessing, I, you know, because I get paid to do this work, too, right? But, you know, it's not just what you do for, with your profession. It's what you do every day, right? It's what you do with, everybody can be a part of this, right? Every single one of us have an opportunity to say, "Yes". And I just, I think that is so powerful. So, thank you for letting me talk about that. It just, it's wonderful to talk with you and with the whole community about how we can say, "Yes".

Carla Long 51:15

Stephen you are so good at this. I've cried, like, three times on this podcast, because you have, you are so inspiring. And I'm so grateful that *you* said, "Yes", to doing this work. And also, I'm really grateful you said, "Yes" to this podcast, because I feel super inspired, and just to continue doing what I'm doing and continue to make those phone calls and writing my editor and making sure that I'm standing for what Community of Christ says are our Enduring Principles and values. And also, what I feel in my heart is my enduring values and principles. So, thank you again, Stephen. It's just been wonderful to have you here.

Stephen Donahoe 51:48

Thank you, Carla. Take care everybody.

Josh Mangelson 51:58

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