

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.

Linda Booth 00:33

Welcome to the 25th episode of Coffee Buzz, a podcast conversation with a member of Community of Christ's First Presidency. My name is Linda Booth and I'm a full time disciple of Jesus Christ and a part-time Project Zion Podcast host and a retired Community of Christ Apostle and Director of Communications having served nearly 23 years with my friend and colleague Prophet-President Steve Veazey who is my guest today. Welcome, Steve. How are you and your family?

Steve Veazey 01:09

Well, thank, thank you for your welcome. And thank you for asking, uh, how we're doing. We're doing well. Uh, like most, we're a bit weary of this pandemic, but we're still managing and, and taking all the health precaution recommendations as we navigate the challenges like everyone else.

Linda Booth 01:33

Absolutely. And it is a challenge. That's probably an understatement, right?

Steve Veazey 01:39

That's an understatement.

Linda Booth 01:41

Well, Coffee Buzz listeners, I wanted to explain to you how we come up with topics of discussion with a member of the First Presidency for Coffee Buzz. And I, we just bounce ideas around that we might talk about and Steve and I had about four or maybe even five interesting topics that are timely that could come up. And the one that we selected, uh, I'm, is my favorite, I think, of all those topics. It's because it's both prophetic and transformative for us as a church. And we're going to talk about metamorphosis which uses the basic idea of the biological process where a caterpillar goes into the cocoon in order to emerge as a butterfly. And I know the idea of the church's metamorphosis has been on your mind, Steve, for quite some time. When and with whom did you first introduce that concept of metamorphosis in relationship to what God is up to in our midst and in relationship to the realization of the massive changes occurring in our culture and how people view religion and faith and spirituality?

Steve Veazey 02:58

I was asked to offer some closing comments, uh, to the World Church Finance Board in December of 2019. And, and that's the board of about 60 people that does the final approval of worldwide ministries budgets for the church representing the World Conference. So, it was at the meeting, uh, in December of 2019 and we had just approved the next year's budget. And I had been asked to share some, some closing comments and I had prepared some notes for what I thought I wanted to say. And, uh, I'd been thinking about some additional comments, uh, that I might say, so I left it kind of open ended. Um, but

as I was speaking to the Finance Board, I had one of those interesting experiences in which I went beyond what I had prepared. And I remember at one point, listening to myself (Yes.) as I talk. I, I don't know if you've ever had that experience.

Linda Booth 04:14

Yes. It's , it's sort of like an out of body experience.

Steve Veazey 04:15

Yeah, you're listening to what's coming, um, and it's, it's obviously, at least from my perspective, a blessing of the, of the Holy Spirit in a particular setting. Uh, but also it may have significance for much broader, uh, application and, and that's what happened. I, I'd launched in some additional observations and it was in that portion of my comments that I drew a contrast between what I call just incremental change, uh, little steps and adjustments, uh, and what I referred to as something more on the scale of metamorphosis and talked about transformation. And again, looking back, I recognize that, in whatever ways the human mind and the Holy Spirit interact, I was prompted to speak more than I, I had prepared.

Linda Booth 05:28

Yes, and, and I encourage our listeners, uh, to check out the words that, uh, Prophet-President Steve Veazey shared with the World Church Finance Board. You can find that on the website. It's, uh, on the December 2019 Herald article, or it's in the Herald article of January and February of 2020 in that issue. So, I would really encourage each one of you to look that up because as I've read that over and over again and studied it, there are some profound statements that I truly can affirm are from the Holy Spirit, uh, that touched you, Steve, and how, uh, gave you the freedom to share those words of both encouragement, but also challenge for the church. Um, and in some of those words, you wrote about the struggles that we're in the midst of and that as a faith movement, we continue to discover what it means to be Community of Christ or the embodiment of the, of Jesus Christ or the eternal Christ. And you mentioned that in the Western world, many seekers are asking, Well, how does your church offer me support for spiritual growth in a loving community with others, especially those who may be different from me. And then you contrast that with some members of the church who continue to ask which church is true and maybe are resistant to letting go of who we've been and where we've been. And, so, it's not those small steps you're talking about. It's a metamorphosis, a, a total transformation of how we see ourselves. And, so, you wrote in that article that one of the great struggles is that much of our church structure was canonized early in our church history and I quote from your words, "And so our people believe that organizational form is the gospel. That's going to be very challenging for us going forward as we shift from understanding the gospel, not as a structure and a form that has to be supported, but as a Spirit, a movement that's expressed in relationships and a focus of ministry that is Christ-inspired, that is Christ-shaped." I mean, those words just blew me away, Steve, quite honestly as other paragraphs in that document. Why is it increasingly essential that a metamorphosis of our very being is needed to be faithful to God's call to us today?

Steve Veazey 08:10

Well, that's that's really the core, uh, fundamental question regarding the nature of the gospel. And I constantly find myself, um, referring to the scriptural language of, of new creation from old creation,

new creation emerging and God saying, you know, I'm doing a new thing from out of God's creative mind and heart that is continuously creating. I, I think to respond specifically to your question, I might use a very familiar term, uh, and that's restoration. Uh, and in Community of Christ, we've said for some time, that restoration is more of an ongoing process. Uh, the Spirit is always restoring as a process of renewing. And the heart of restoration is about being responsive to the movement of the Holy Spirit right now to form and position the church to offer relevant ministry and witness in these, um, dynamic contexts around the world. So, metamorphosis is about allowing the Holy Spirit to do its work of renewal and transformation in us, and when I say us, I'm speaking both individually and together, it's both at the same time, it's not one or the other, um, that empowers and equips us to respond more effectively and, and fully to God's call today. So, a lot of times in our movement and associated movements, the term restoration, uh, typically refers in people's minds to an event that happened before and that somehow that event was all sufficient for the future. And, and I understand where that thinking comes from. (Yes.) And certainly in the early church, there was reinforcement of that kind of thinking. But we've discovered that restoration is really being attuned with the Holy Spirit as it continues to orient us and reorient us to the heart of the gospel as embodied in Jesus Christ.

Linda Booth 11:15

And of, of course, Latter Day scripture or inspired counsel continues, you can feel the urgency almost of the Spirit of God pressing us, pushing us, pulling us forward into a future that we're trying to envision what that might look like.

Steve Veazey 11:34

Yes. And it's a, obviously a future that hasn't been before. So, (Yes, yes.) it's, it's, it's new and unfolding.

Linda Booth 11:46

And it's risky, isn't it? (Yes.) Very risky. So, in those closing remarks to the World Church Finance Board, you challenged the church to envision and embody more effective and relevant ways of being the church in a rapidly shifting world. And I, I know that struck a chord with church leaders that sit on that Finance Board which led them to the World Church Leadership engaging in an intentional discernment process. Um, when you entered the discernment with the World Church leaders, did you have a purpose in mind for the process? Did you have a specific outcome in mind?

Steve Veazey 12:30

Well, um, I would say the purpose of the process was, was twofold. One was to gain skills and experience with discernment. Because of the desire for the church to have a, a culture of ongoing discernment as a, as a prophetic people. That's, that's the position, that's the mode we need to be in. Um, and, so, we understood that that required some growth of understanding and experience on our part so that we might better support the church as a discerning, prophetic people a, a, around the world. And then secondly, as a Council with some newer and, uh, more senior members, uh, we thought it would be helpful to our own community formation or formation as a Council, to spend time in those discernment practices, uh, and explore together, um, as a community of servant leaders, uh, the vision and direction of the church. Um, and so it was really both of those. And, of course, discernment in its most genuine form, is not predictable. Uh, you, you don't have a particular outcome in mind other

than to come to a position of de, desiring what God desires. And that can require you to, to shed some of your own personal agenda or desired outcomes. And that's one of the most difficult aspects of discernment, of discernment, the position, the disposition of spiritual freedom that's needed in order to be most fully open.

Linda Booth 14:50

And, of course, this discernment, the pandemic hit right, right at the beginning or soon after the beginning of that discernment process. Um, that probably was an impairment, but also might have freed the Council in new ways. How, how did the pandemic impact your discernment process?

Steve Veazey 15:13

Well, it was a disruption, (Yes.) uh, because our, our discernment facilitators had planned, uh, a process that was very thorough and comprehensive, uh, that anticipated a lot more time together in person, face-to-face. And just after the beginning of the process, just as we were getting our feet on the, on the ground in terms of how we were going to engage, the pandemic hit and, uh, we, we couldn't meet together in person. Now, fortunately, we have the technology, the online technology to continue the process, which we wanted to do, but because of the time zones around the world where members of the World Church Leadership Council live, our time of interaction, even online, was, was limited, (Yeah.) and it was reduced. Now, on the other side of that, what that, uh, afforded, or the pandemic afforded and our changed schedule, was more time for us individually and in smaller groups to prayerfully reflect and engage, uh, in the kinds of questions and, and practices that had been proposed, uh, to us. And the pandemic, uh, greatly curtailed our travel throughout the world. And, as you know, travel is very time consuming and (Yes.) demanding and sometimes fatiguing. (Yes.) Uh, but in the midst of the pandemic, uh, we weren't doing that. So, we had more time to pursue the discernment process itself. And I see in that some, um, some blessing for the process.

Linda Booth 17:23

Yes. Um, I, I'm remember reminded at the end of World Conference, you, um, you shared the following words, Go with conviction into the location of your discipleship and be the peace of Jesus Christ. As you do, you will discover a variety of ways in which spiritual community forms and flows as expressions of the gospel of peace. Trust that it is being born. Have faith in the divine purpose. Persist in hope. And as I read those words, it reminded me of the discernment process and I, and did those words contribute to the discernment work? And if so how?

Steve Veazey 18:08

Well, they preceded the discernment process, and really, in some ways preceded our focus planning, the discernment process. But as we know, the Holy Spirit's the, the great Weaver of, uh, of possibilities going forward. Uh, so, I was responding at the time to what I perceived to be the guidance of the Spirit and the words that were shared, uh, pointed to what became the discernment process and is becoming a much larger discernment process, uh, throughout the church. So, I don't know how much it influenced others. I could certainly see the connections. Um, and I've, I've indicated that we should see all of that as the movement of the Spirit in our midst.

Linda Booth 19:12

Yes. So, if the Holy Spirit, and as you've been saying, is the primary driver of metamorphosis or discernment, do you see evidence of the Spirit working throughout the church? And, if so, do you have some examples to share with us?

Steve Veazey 19:30

Well, I certainly see, see evidence regularly, daily, uh, in the devoted ministry that's going on all over the world, and the ability of the church to respond to the needs of people. That, in and of itself, is evidence of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the gospel, the Spirit of Christ in our mi, in our midst flowing in the community. I'm also aware of more congregations and, and mission centers and, uh, newly emerging or fresh expressions of the church that are engaging in their own discernment processes. Um, intentional discernment, long term discernment as they try to gain clarity about their own sense of calling in the context they serve. And, and I see that as movement of the Holy Spirit because part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is not just to help us to see God's will, but to actually stimulate within us the desire to desire to discover.

Linda Booth 20:59

Yeah, that holy, that holy yearning.

Steve Veazey 21:02

That holy yearning. What, what prompts us to even want to do that? Well, that's the Holy Spirit, too, so, I see that being manifest in, in, uh, the spread of desire for discernment through, throughout the church. And I'm also aware of, of congregations and groups in the midst of the disruption of the pandemic who, um, developed very creative ministries to overcome the obstacles, um, created by not being able to meet so much in person. And yet, uh, the same sense of calling to compassionate ministry and community building found new expression. And that's right at the heart of what the Holy Spirit does in any given time, or, or situation or context.

Linda Booth 22:06

Yes. Um, listeners, uh, in the January-February 2022 Herald, uh, and it will be online, uh, President Veazey is going to present, uh, a paper or a document, uh, to the church. And I had the privilege of reading that in preparation for our conversation today. And it, um, it had, there's a line in it, Steve, that I, I really found significant, which I haven't thought about, uh, community in this way. And, so, uh, as the discernment process unfolded, after prayer and discovery, uh, the World Church Leadership Council, um, began to ask where God or where's God's Spirit leading us next as a church as we embody the soul of Community of Christ. And that phrase, soul of Community of Christ, has really intrigued me and has got me thinking. So, I'd like to hear your thoughts about what that means to you now, knowing that your understanding will continue to grow as will the church's.

Steve Veazey 23:20

Yeah. That was one of the interesting outcomes of the discernment process. Um, it's not a phrase or lang, language that was being used frequently, (Yeah.) um, in the life of the church. But as we got into the discernment process, part of the process was to identify what really is the question we're trying to discern about? And that's frequently, uh, a vital part of discernment. Often we, we start with a question,

but we end up with another question. So, the Holy Spirit can move us to what the most essential or most important question is. And it was during that process of going through different iterations of what is the question that this language began to emerge and it was soulful language. And we took note of that. Our tendency as, as leaders is to do strategic planning and to look at tangible elements of the church structure and organization and, and, uh, what we're able to physically offer. But the language of soul, um, called us to go deeper into the, uh, the heart or essence of the church as a, a living body, of, of a soul that is embodied, that comes out of our experience, our, our sacred story through which God is doing something in, in, in the world. And so we really explored that concept. And, uh, we discovered that there was a semantic or, or language connection between the idea of soul as heart or essence, or, or mind, and metamorphosis. And that was a surprise to us, that in Greek thought and in ancient thought there was a real connection between those two. So, we began to explore that and discovered that what we really needed to focus on, uh, was discerning what our communal soul, the very Spirit at the heart of Community of Christ, the Spirit that animates us individually and collectively to do what we do and to be who we are. What is it yearning for (Yes.) because the soul is the truest self? It's, it's the God gift in a person or community that is the truest essence of who that person or community is. And it was to that kind of depth that we were called, uh, in, in the discernment process. We also discovered that the soul wants to tell the truth about God, uh, uh, about ourselves, and about the world in which we live. And it wants, it wants to, um, keep us true to who we are and who we're called to be. That's the soul. We also discovered that the soul can be kind of shy. It needs to be encouraged to express itself.

Linda Booth 27:37

And it's also a little mystical, isn't it?

Steve Veazey 27:40

And it's a mystery in the final analysis. It's a mystery even as I struggle to find words to describe it, I have more of a sense of it, and, and words, of which I can't explain it. But that's that's often the, the challenge.

Linda Booth 27:56

Well, I think that's why those words really resonated with me, because the soul of Community of Christ, that communal soul, that collective soul is so intriguing to me, if, if indeed we actually recognized and were empowered and, and enfolded with that understanding. So, I, I went back in, into section 150, 65 and, and you talked about, or it talks about, uh, boldly following the initiatives into the heart of God's vision for the church and creation. And as I was reading that again, I, I think that is a little bit about what the soul of Community of Christ is, is following the heart of God into God's vision.

Steve Veazey 28:46

Yes. Yes. I, I would agree with that.

Linda Booth 28:50

Yeah. So, so I was trying to find words, too, words that I was familiar with that we, that have been in our scripture and that we have talked about to help me to understand, begin to understand what that, uh, to embody the soul of Community of Christ means.

Steve Veazey 29:09

I, I think we tapped into it, uh, during the process where we were identifying our enduring principles. So, there's also a real connection there. (Yes.) I, I think the soul of Community of Christ yearns for those enduring principles to be not only embodied in our faith community, but then shared with the world.

Linda Booth 29:37

Yes. And, and, so, it's also in, it's also in the mission initiatives, too, (It is.) isn't it. Yes. And, so, it's not like this is something new. It's just a new way of thinking about discerning, being prayerful about what it means.

Steve Veazey 29:56

Yes, and, uh, I would say our soul is once again trying to get our attention which comes from becoming more aware on our part of what the soul is, is saying and yearning for.

Linda Booth 30:18

And, in fact, in Section 165, it does use the word soul. It says, Listen to the testimonies of those responding generously and follow your soul's yearning to come home to God's grace and generosity. Oh, and that's, isn't that beautiful. Follow your soul's yearning to come home to God's grace and generosity. So that's, that's at the heart of the community, (Yes.) soul's community, too, isn't it?

Steve Veazey 30:50

Yeah. You know, I hadn't made that connection. But, but now that you reference that, that passage, the, the soul language is right, right there.

Linda Booth 31:00

It is. (Yeah.) It is. Yeah. So, I'm really thankful for the, the discernment that you and the World Church Leadership Council has been going through and that new understanding of what it means to be Community of Christ because we've been thinking a lot about our identity and our calling. But that soul work is so imperative to both our identity and our calling.

Steve Veazey 31:26

Yes. And, and the work of the Holy Spirit, I think, is to help us, keep us aware of, of that essence of who we are and then call us, uh, and equip us to express it in, in effective ways. And that's part of what's going on in the life of the church now amid, a, a, a dynamic changing world and various contexts around the world.

Linda Booth 31:59

Yes. From that discernment process as well came a, a statement not for the entire church, but for the World Church Leadership Council. Would you talk a little bit about that discernment statement and how, uh, the First Presidency's and, and other leaders are using it as a lens, uh, to make decisions a, as we move into the future?

Steve Veazey 32:23

Yeah. Um, as we moved through the discernment process, we began to, um, experiment, I guess, is one word you could use or explore, that's a better word, how would we state or articulate what we were sensing and people contributed to different parts of that which is as it should be. Uh, and this, this statement emerged and it's quite a statement. Uh, it's, it's very, um, affirming of our current direction as well as visionary and it introduces some, some new elements, uh, that we want to pay attention to. So, in the Presidency, um, as we think about decisions and propose, proposed courses of action, we, we look at that discernment statement, especially some key phrases in it, and ask ourselves, uh, whether a particular decision will take us in the direction of a fulfilling or being in harmony with the discernment statement or whether it won't do that. So, it, it begins to impact how we think about situations or our own behavior, and that is as it should be. It should transform us if it's been a transformative experience at all. And it's certainly done that.

Linda Booth 34:05

And, so, is it alright if I share that you want to share that paragraph, that discernment statement, because it has some powerful words in it, that I know leaders, but I think they're words, it's not necessarily to be used for the whole church, but I think it blesses the church by even hearing the words spoken.

Steve Veazey 34:25

I don't have it right before me, but if you do, (I do.) that would be fine to share.

Linda Booth 34:30

And I know why do, you haven't memorized it because it's (Yeah. I don't have it memorized.) (. . .)

Steve Veazey 34:36

Or I might say it differently. So, I want to be careful. And I will say and emphasize the point you just made, this, this statement is a result of the work of the Leadership Council. We are not trying to say (No.) Okay, this is the statement of the whole church because we know better than that, that church-wide discernment needs, uh, many avenues of discussion and prayerful reflection in different cultures and at World Conference coming together in the international body. Um, but sure, um, sharing it will give a good window into the results of an over year-long process, um, that I think has implications for the future of the church.

Linda Booth 35:30

I do too. And so the discernment statement, uh, that the World Church Leadership Council is still working on and refining, is my understanding, and this is, and I will quote it now. The soul of Community of Christ is expressed most fully as we embody Jesus Christ, the peaceful one and his mission. This happens through relational, spiritual, Invitational and globally-connected Christ-centered communities actively pursuing justice and peace on and for the earth. The enduring principles are a guide for our continual discernment and practice of what is essential for the life, forms and holistic mission of the church. We are discovering a posture of simplicity, agility, and flexibility will equip and poise us to faithfully live the heart of our calling in a changing world. We are growing in trust of what it means to be transformed in Christ and engaged in whole-life stewardship as we make decisions and

courageously share all the dimensions of Christ's peace in our world. So, Steve, that, that statement, while, is very complex, but it uses phrases that are no surprise to us in Community of Christ. It just brings them together in a very, uh, challenging and perhaps holistic way.

Steve Veazey 37:13

Yeah, I think, uh, one of the outcomes of the discernment process was a sense of, we're on the right track. (Yes.) We have been responding, um, and we've been responding over decades to the direction of the Holy Spirit in terms of the future of the church. And then, as you say, there are certain phrases calling for more attention now (Yes.) in this journey of becoming and the discernment statement helps us identify those.

Linda Booth 37:47

Yes. And, and three words stuck out to me, I mean, a lot of words stuck out to me and we could go down through that, that statement and talk and unpack each one of those phrases. But there were three new words that haven't popped up to my knowledge, and that was simplicity, agility, and flexibility, which, I guess, obviously leads to a metamorphosis in the church, in our mission perhaps, in the way in which we view organization perhaps, in finances and a variety of other areas.

Steve Veazey 38:26

Yeah, those those three phrases seem to, to really pop out as we look back on the statement and call for, for more attention, uh, until we're having a lot of discussion about what they what they mean. Um, simplicity, I think, involves focus on what matters most, um, unburdening ourselves from things that distract us or, or hold us back. But it may just be the yearning of a bunch of church administrators dealing with very complex situations. I say that in jest. (Yes.) It's, it's true. What, what do we spend our time on? Where do we put our efforts? And then, um, agility and flexibility are really reflections of what we've already been talking about. We live in a diverse world, many different cultures and languages and, and people with their own histories. And in the midst of this, the purpose of the church is to incarnate the Eternal Word in all of those settings. Um, and so we're recognizing that, that we have to be flexible in terms of where people are in their own journeys. Where cultures are, where nations are, what kind of conditions there are. And all of that has to be taken into account in terms of how we develop the church or introduce the church, uh, how we share witness of the, of the gospel. Um, we're also giving serious thought to aspects of church structure and organization that, that need to be opened up a bit to allow for adaptability and flexibility to particular circumstances. And, so, we're exploring that at, uh, the Presidency is anticipating bringing some recommendations, uh, to the next World Conference regarding, um, opening up space in our church bylaws, uh, for this flexibility in response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to occur. We're still working on that right now in terms of what's needed and church bylaws, of course, function behind the scenes, uh, but they are important in terms of our mutual understanding of how the church, uh, lives in the world and how it organizes itself.

Linda Booth 41:31

And, so, that will be exciting to make a space for those new, fresh missional expressions in the church that probably are emerging, uh, just from necessity because of the pandemic.

Steve Veazey 41:45

Absolutely. (Yeah.) So here's another example of where the disruption of the pandemic, as tragic as it is, (Yes.) uh, is also driving innovation. Um, and, and the Holy Spirit is taking advantage of the opportunity of, of people asking questions in order to inspire in certain directions.

Linda Booth 42:15

Yes, and it's exciting. As you said, it's a sorrowful time and it has been a very difficult time, but it also, in view of the Holy Spirit moving in our midst and pushing us forward, is also an exciting time, uh, to be a member of Community of Christ if we listen and discern and risk and are courageous enough to go where it leads us.

Steve Veazey 42:41

These are certainly interesting times.

Linda Booth 42:43

Yes, certainly interesting times. And, so, um, so you've already mentioned some tangible outcomes from the First Presidency's and the World Church Leadership Council's focus on metamorphosis having to do with World Conference. Uh, are you also thinking about ways maybe in the future of having an e-conference or a virtual conference because we so, it's so expensive and so hard to get our delegates, uh, uh, visas in, to come to the United States?

Steve Veazey 43:16

Yeah. Um, yes, I mean, we're considering all options for the future. Uh, we recognize the powerful impact and blessing of delegates from around the world coming together in one place to interact with each other, to worship together, to decide together, um, in, in a setting that encourages us to be open to the Spirit. Uh, at the same time, we recognize all the factors that, that you lifted up. So, we're seriously pursuing, uh, the concept of, uh, of what I would call a hybrid World Conference where there would be electronic acc, access for some delegates or groups that, that had unusual obstacles to face that would keep them from coming, whatever they might be. And that would be individual delegates and then also, uh, remote locations for people to gather together who could participate in the, in the conference. As you might imagine, it's extremely complicated. Uh, it also has budgetary implications (Yes.) in terms of having the technology and the infrastructure available, uh, so that it can function effectively. So, you know, we, it would be very disappointing for people if they gathered in some area and then somehow (Yes.) connection wasn't consistent or didn't work according to expectations. So, we're trying to look at all the factors and variables that, that might be involved. But I, I think we'll see some expression of that at, at the 2023 World Conference. And we'll probably be testing some of that technology at our 2022 World Church online event where we start preparation for the 2023 conference.

Linda Booth 45:32

Oh, that, that is, that's wonderful. Yeah, you, really the World Church Finance Board at one time always met in person, (. . .) you be, then we began to explore using how to use translators to help those who were online. And, and so you've, the church has begun that process incrementally, uh, but (Yeah.) now,

but the pandemic has just made us realize how hard and how important it is now for us to look even into the future of what might be? (Yes.) Yeah.

Steve Veazey 46:06

I would say that's certainly going to be, uh, an important part of how we interact in the future and one of the bylaws recommendations that we'll bring is to fully authorize electronic conferencing.

Linda Booth 46:24

Yes, yes. I, I had the privilege last evening of being on a Zoom support group with some, some women from the Asian Pacific field. And one of the women from South Korea was talking about the joy of coming to World Conference. Uh, and she wished that her congregation would have the opportunity to see the diversity of our church and understand that we truly are an international soul community. She didn't use the word soul community. I'm, I'm plugging that in now because it has such resonance for me. Uh, but I can imagine, then, even that people who are not delegates while they wouldn't be voting, could actually using virtually see the faces of people from around the world and actually understand that we are an international (Yes.) community. And so that would, that would be the answer to her yearning that she expressed last night, that her congregation there in Seoul, Korea, could, South Korea could, um, understand the diversity of our church and really appreciate that she is a member of something bigger than just their congregation there in Seoul, Korea.

Steve Veazey 47:43

Well, hope, hopefully, um, there, there'll be more ways in which people can experience that, more opportunities using the technology, and even how we organize the conference and use technology to show the diversity of the body, uh, and our translators, of course, being involved in describing things. All of that working together. I'm certain will be a part of our near and long term future.

Linda Booth 48:16

Yeah, that, and for me, that's very exciting for myself, but more importantly for the entire church. Uh, Steve, what are some of the ongoing challenges that could derail or complicate the process of metamorphosis? Have, have you or the World, or the First Presidency or the World Church Leadership Council thought about what some of those challenges might be?

Steve Veazey 48:41

Well, fundamentally, metamorphosis is, is scary to, it's frightening to some people.(Yeah.) Uh, people who desire, uh, clear certainty about what is and what will be. Uh, we're in a different kind of time and space, uh, that, uh, space in history, I'm referring to that, uh, some of the authors today are referring to as liminal space, which means in between space, (Yeah.) uh, significant changes occurring, uh, in creation. But we're not yet able to see all the implications of that change and all the outcomes, so we're in between. Um, and, and that's one of the greatest challenges to metamorphosis, um, is that there's a hesitancy to embrace what is coming because it requires us to change perhaps in, in terms of our attitudes or behaviors or, uh, expectations. So, that's, that's one part. And then the second part, I think already referred to, um, is there is a mindset in some parts of the church that how the church is organized and its structure is actually essential to our understanding of the, of the gospel. Um, and, so, the, keeping the organization becomes very, um, important for some people because it gives that

certainty. (Yes.) Um, and, and it's a challenge because many aspects of our organization and structure, uh, were canonized early in the church and served the church well. But the church has grown and evolved as it has, um, journeyed throughout history and the world. (Yes.) Um, and so we also have to remember that counsel has been given to the church that certain things have to be reinterpreted for a new day, for a new age. Uh, and the willingness to do that is, is part of the challenge of metamorphosis.

Linda Booth 51:30

Yes. And, and so in this pivotal time, in the metamorphosis process, uh, how do you, quote, trust what is being born?

Steve Veazey 51:41

I'm not, I'm not sure I can speak for anyone other than myself, (Yes.) uh, but I can say that, for me, I have kind of a, a inner compass. (Yeah.) I don't, some might call it intuitive sense, but it's not just feeling, it's something deeper than that, that sort of guides me and brings assurance that I should keep moving in a particular direction. (Yes.) And even though I can't see all the way down the path, um, and, and that's what I pay attention to. Uh, I, I have a sense of peace and consolation even in the midst of questions and issues, um, and I've learned that that is what I should, should follow. And if I'm getting off of that path, then I'll experience some, some, um, unsettledness, frustration, what the ancient mystics and in discernment is called desolation. It's like, it doesn't, it doesn't seem to be the right way. Now, I know that's ambiguous and, uh, and not easy to grab ahold of for some. But that's how it works for me. So, I'm sensing that God is doing something in the life of the church that's very important. It's been going on for a while. And there's an ultimate purpose in mind. And, so, I'm part of that journey. I don't know how far I will see into the journey, uh, or to the journey's end, which I doubt I will because God's work always takes more than one generation to accomplish. We see that over and over again in Scripture. But it, it's faith. That's, I guess, to sum it up. It's faith. Being willing to trust further than we can see.

Linda Booth 54:06

Yes. Well, Steve, I thank you so much, uh, for sharing your thoughts and your faith with Coffee Buzz listeners. I'm so thankful for your courage and dedication to lead the church and continue to pull us along as you discern God's will for where God is calling us, who we are to be and we are, what we are to do. So, I thank you very much, Steve, and I, and I trust what is being born. And I trust you and I trust leaders. And I thank you for leading the church and for, um, being the example of a person who depends and is vulnerable to the Holy Spirit. So, thank you very much. And thank you Coffee Buzz listeners for joining our conversation. I hope, uh, you engage in spiritual practices that will inspire you, uh, to be fully engaged in compassionate and action. And please watch for next month's episode of Coffee Buzz. I'll be having a conversation with another member of the First Presidency, Stassi Cramm, who serves as counselor to President Steve Veazey and as Presiding Bishopric.

Josh Mangelson 55:35

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. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.