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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 28th episode of Coffee Buzz, a podcast conversation with a member of Community of Christ First Presidency. If this is your first time listening to a Coffee Buzz episode, let me introduce myself. My name is Linda Booth. In 1998, I was ordained an Apostle in Community of Christ, one of the first two women to serve in the Council of Twelve Apostles. And in 2019, I retired after serving all those years as an Apostle and Director of Communications. One of the many blessings and joys of serving God and God's people during that time, was serving with my guest today, Community of Christ Prophet President Steve Veazey. Welcome, my friend, how are you? And how's your family?

Steve Veazey 01:25

Well, thank you for your welcome. And I want to say hello to all the listeners. um, and thank you for asking about how, uh, I'm doing and my family's doing. And I always say well we're doing about as well as everybody else in the midst of, of these times, and especially amid the pandemic. Um, we're, we're trying to maintain as, uh, as normal of a life as possible, uh, even though, uh, we have these precautions and, and disruptions that affect the whole family in different ways. Uh, and so, I can understand, uh, everyone's, uh, frustration and impatience, concern, uh, in that regard. So, we're persisting.

Linda Booth 02:26

Yes, that's a good word. We're all persisting. And, so, we're in a brand new year, and it is, 'tis the season to make New Year's resolutions. Have you set any personal resolutions for 2022?

Steve Veazey 02:43

Um, I guess in a way I have. I, I, I tend not to specifically set New Year's resolutions. Um, but the new year is a time that I think we pause and reflect on how things have been and how we would like them to be and, uh, patterns or habits in our lives that, that we would like to improve or change. Um, so, as I, as I transitioned from 2021 to 2022, especially having a, a little break during the holidays that I could kind of, uh, reset. Uh, I've, I've become even more intentional about spiritual practices that help me manage stress and related anxiety, uh, especially in relation to the challenges of, of ministry and, and leadership of a very diverse, uh, church body around the world that's facing all kinds of challenges. Our, our personalities, as, as you know, are to, to want to help. And sometimes that's not possible or to the degree we would like to. So, I'm working, um, even more, because I was working on it before, even more on establishing and trying to stay in that quiet center of Christ's presence and peace, or at least to do it more consistently because I do find myself wandering out of it. But to do it more consistently, you know, in the midst of everything that's, that's going on around me, um, in the church and in the world and, and so forth. So, that's, I would say that was my resolution. And, uh, I've, I've been doing it.

Linda Booth 04:55

Good, good. You're right, it, you need, it has to be intentional. It has (Yeah.) to be the center of who we are and how we lead our lives. So thank you for that reminder.

Steve Veazey 05:06

It has, it has to become the, the new habit (Yes.) of your life. The new pattern of your life. Yeah.

Linda Booth 05:13

Absolutely. Well, I, I know you and your counselors in the First Presidency, who are Scott Murphy and Stassi Cramm, uh, have been focusing on discerning a vision for the church's global mission or discerning where God is leading Community of Christ. And as part of that envisioning process, I'd like to talk with you about the recently completed three year strategic plan for the work of the Presidency for this new year through 2024. And as I thought about putting together a three year strategic plan, I thought that task must have been massive undertaking because, as you mentioned earlier, Community of Christ has this wonderful, complex diversity. Uh, for Coffee Buzz listeners, just a reminder, Community of Christ is established in over 50 nations of the world. And our congregations and mission centers are made up of people from many different cultures, backgrounds and experiences, uh, with many different languages and complicated organizational structures and national laws. So, with such diversity, Steve, how did the First Presidency approach the formation of a strategic plan to guide your area of leadership emphasis into the future?

Steve Veazey 06:36

Well, we, we approached it with, uh, already engaged in a, a constant process of discernment. Uh, so, daily, weekly, monthly, we're trying to discern how we should apply ourselves, um, in terms of our leadership responsibilities in the church, and also a lot of discussion from our various vantage points. Uh, even in the Presidency, there, there's a diversity of perspective that I think is a strength. Um, and part of it was, uh, recognizing, uh, up front that just how complex and diverse the worldwide church is, and that our role was to try to identify for ourselves, how can we, uh, have the most faithful and effective impact within our broader leadership responsibilities, uh, for the whole church across all that diversity and complexity. A, and we also wanted to uphold and recognize that, that much of the work of discerning actual church direction needs to happen in those diverse contexts, in the social, cultural and political context in which the church pursues its mission. And that's the work of local leaders and, and groups of disciples who are living and serving in those contexts. Whether it's the apostolic field, the Mission Center, the congregation, a, a, a group, or some kind of network of members and, and friends who meet sometimes, but maybe they're online a lot. All of that, uh, has to be, uh, discerned as direction, uh, in the lives of those leaders and, and disciples. I have been known on various occasions when asked about what is the church's strategic plan to pause and say, to whatever group it is, you are the church's strategy. And people kind of sit back. Uh, but the point is twofold. One is theological and one is practical. The theological point is the church's purpose is to embody the gospel in individual lives and communities of disciples, uh, mem, members and friends who are living out the life and mission of Jesus Christ. So, the church's strategy is its people and its relationships and the, the degree to which we embody that. And that gets to the practical side. We, we can have all kinds of strategic plans and, and programs, uh, but unless it connects with the church's call and people's willingness and desire to en flesh it in their own lives and in their congregations in, in their groups and networks. Strategic plans

may have little effect. So, uh, but, but as a Presidency, we affirm the church's mission statement, our enduring principles, our, our mission initiatives, all of which have been articulated for some time. And, and our basic beliefs and, and said, Well, one of our roles is to be the stewards and advocates for the importance of those expressions of our faith and our mission. And the importance of people contextualizing or enfleshing that in their, in their local settings. So, that was an important part of the process. And then we moved towards naming some desired emphases for our leadership after that.

Linda Booth 11:16

I really appreciate your description of the role of the First Presidency as stewards and advocates for the church's mission, as well as your understanding that the role, really the practical way it's played out, is through the apostolic fields, mission centers, congregations, specialized groups who live and embody the enduring principles and mission initiatives in the way, in ways that are relevant and impactful in a variety of social, cultural, uh, national and local contexts. So, I, I really appreciate you, uh, describing those different roles and, and, and the importance of how those roles, uh, interface and work together. Um, please outline the plans of three strategic, uh, outcomes or emphases for the next three years and then we'll discuss each one (Yeah.) individually.

Steve Veazey 12:18

So, a, after that process of identifying, uh, the role of world church leadership as vested in the Presidency, we, we then spent time saying, What will have the most positive impact to these processes of planning and discernment and enfleshing the gospel in all of these contexts around the world. And, so, we identified the following three desired outcomes, areas of emphasis, um, as, as being very important. The first one, uh, is to develop and empower church leaders a, around the world, uh, indigenous leaders, uh, younger leaders. And, of course, leaders emerge from formed disciples, disciple members of the church. Uh, and so we said, Well, number one, we have to focus and even accelerate the development and empowerment of church leaders and disciples around the world. The second one was to support in every way we can, local initiatives to create Christ-centered, Spirit-led communities, and you could say communities of disciples and leaders and, and friends, that are working for justice and peace. Uh, that, that's the most fundamental expression of Community of Christ in the local contexts a, around the world. It's in community with each other that we carry out the mission. And then thirdly, um, and all of these are related, but thirdly, to accelerate the purposes of the Temple as an ensign of peace around the world in fulfillment of its, its stated purposes.

Linda Booth 14:40

I'm excited about those three, uh, strategic outcomes or emphasis. Listening to you list those three outcomes also has raised my level of hope for the church's future. I believe the three strategic outcomes can greatly impact the church's mission around the world. So, tell us about The First Presidency's vision for strategic outcome number one, Develop and empower church leaders and disciples.

Steve Veazey 15:09

Well, I, I think it's, uh, fairly basic and easy to understand that disciple and leader formation, uh, is essential to church life and mission. That is, where we have committed disciple members and we have committed visionary leaders, the church tends to become more healthy and vibrant and, and thrive. But

in addition to this, we noted, um, and are communicating that we want to have a particular emphasis that's focused on leader and disciple formation of younger generation, or what we, in shorthand, often refer to as next generations of disciples and leaders at all level of church organization, whether it's congregational, mission center, or at the world church, uh, level of organization, we, we are focusing in on, on that important need to the future of the church. Now, specifically, uh, the church is going to partner with Community of Christ Seminary at Graceland University to develop high quality education and training, uh, for, uh, priesthood members, ordained ministers in the church, and emerging leaders who, of course, in our tradition, are non-employees, but are mostly self sustaining and are volunteers. Um, and so the vision is to provide the kind of education and training, but in a more, in a holistic way formation, leadership and disciple formation for these folks who are already responding to their sense of, of call. So, this, this emphasis will include offering, uh, courses and experiences, uh, including pre-ordination courses that people can access on a regularly scheduled basis. So, as a church, we have certain expectations for pre-ordination preparation. And, uh, this emphasis will, I think, more effectively deliver those courses. Um, and, of course, um, in this day and age, everything is being designed in that regard with online applications and course access in mind. And then over a three year partnership with the Seminary at Graceland University, we hope to serve at least 500 current and emerging, uh, ministers and, and leaders through this emphasis. Now the, it'll continue beyond that, but for the purposes of planning, we've identified how to get started. And we've identified funding sources, uh, for the emphasis.

Linda Booth 18:43

Oh, that's ex, that's exciting. That's wonderful. And so these will, about how, how soon do you think we'll be starting to see those move out onto the Internet so that people can access them? Do you have an idea?

Steve Veazey 18:57

It's, it's hard to say at this point. Um, the planning is happening. The conversations have occurred and the seminary has posted a new position that will be a director and coordinator of this emphasis working with the director of, of the whole seminary. And the seminary will continue to offer, uh, a Master of Arts in Religion. So, those, that's a degreed program. The seminary will offer a new master's program, uh, related to peace and social justice. So, the seminary has announced that and arranged for that. Our spiritual formation and companioning program, it's not a degree program, but it is, the certificate program will become part of this emphasis along with what church members would typically understand as key Temple School courses (Yes.) that are delivered throughout the church that are focused on different aspects of, of ministry and, and, and leadership. Um, so, I think this first year will be a year of ramping up and putting in place and, and getting started. And then we'll see it build from, from there. Uh, and then there's a plan for how it will be sustained into the future. So we're excited about it.

Linda Booth 20:34

I'm excited about it, too. And I'm sure our listeners will be looking forward to seeing those, uh, begin to be, uh, released into the life of the church. It is really exciting to think about developing and inspiring, uh, those 500 future leaders, uh, younger leaders, etc, to lead the church's mission in fresh ways for new generations. Uh, it's also a very challenging outcome to achieve. Um, this strategic outcome reminds me of something I read in Alan Roxburgh's book, *Joining God, uh, Remaking the Church,*

Changing the World. Uh, he reports that in the Western world, if a person was born after 1984, there is less than a 10% chance that they will be involved in church today. So, by his calculations, or his research, people, 38 years and younger are probably not involved in Community of Christ or other denominations today, that is if they live in Western nations. And, of course, because before the pandemic, when we were meeting in congregational buildings, chances are that most of us didn't see many younger adults on Sunday. Any preliminary thoughts on how to identify, engage and then develop and inspire these future leaders, especially for pastors and others in mission centers, uh, to help them identify and engage and develop?

Steve Veazey 22:05

Yeah, it's a, it's a multi-, uh, dimensional or multi-pronged approach that I think, um, is needed. Uh, there's all, always the personal relationships that world church leaders and, uh, field leaders and congregational leaders have, uh, with, uh, young adults, so a lot of its relationship building and, and listening. But being aware of these opportunities, then making young adults a, um, um, aware that, of the availability of this kind of, um, disciple and leader formation e, e, experience. So, it's, it's relational. Um, I, I think we'll see some very targeted communications done in some creative ways using, uh, sight and sound and, uh, social media. Um, there'll be a strategy, um, to reach prospective students. Um, and then, uh, we'll urge participants who have had a good experience to use their networks of relationships and, and influence to say to others, You really ought to, yeah, do this. This is a good experience. So, it'll be motivational, uh, relational, invitational, and then I think the whole program will prove itself over time. Um, and, of course, the, the online access to the coursework will make it more accessible to people. Uh, um, and I think that will have a positive effect as people identify when and, and how they can connect with these kinds of, of experiences. A positive indicator we have is, uh, using some of these approaches and creative communications, video-based communications, overall enrollment in the seminary, uh, in the degree programs, the, the master's program, um, has increased to a, to a very good level from our perspective, and that level is being sustained with new people coming in as others graduate. (Fantastic.) So, there, there's an interest in it.

Linda Booth 24:51

Yes, of course there is. And you're right. The using motivational, relational and invitational, uh, videos and social media is an excellent way to connect with and en, engage others. So, that's, that's wonderful. Uh, many of us have read about or talked with younger adults who consider themselves, uh, and I quote, spiritual but not religious. In fact, I've had those conversations even with my own grown children. And during the pandemic, I've developed meaningful spiritual spaces, uh, without having the opportunity to enter a church sanctuary, which I guess could be considered spiritual, but not religious. Uh, Diane Butler Bass, as many of our listeners know, is the one that, I don't know if she coined the term spiritual, but not religious, but she certainly has written about it in some of her books. And she says that many people are and I'm quoting, traveling new paths of meaning, exploring new ways to live their lives, experiencing a new sense of authenticity and wonder, and practicing new forms of community that address global concerns without stepping into a sanctuary or worshipping within the walls of a church, end quote. And many people, including those younger adults, our next generation of leaders, have entered a spiritual space beyond institutions or buildings, but are committed to justice and peacemaking. I, I know the First Presidency's talked about how younger adults who are those next

generations of leaders, seek relevance, uh, often found in their pursuit of justice and peacemaking. Any comments about how this strategic outcome addresses this desire for relevance and purpose?

Steve Veazey 26:46

Yeah, and I'd just like to say, uh, the Presidency and, and other world church leaders have been engaged in, um, listening and discussion sessions, uh, with young adults, both in person and dispersed online. And it bears out what you're saying in terms of, of where younger generations are gaining their spiritual meaning, their transformative experience, and where they see themselves expressing their, their giftedness and, quite frankly, contributing their resources and, you know, including financial resources, where, where they want to focus that. Um, so, our conversations say, Yeah, that, that's important. Um, and that's why we see language related to justice and peacemaking, uh, and a commitment that that (. . .) and not just words or, or nice, uh, sentiment. What I'm most hopeful about is that an emphasis on justice and peacemaking related to the concept of Zion is already embedded in our movement. We, we just need to build on that. (Yes. Yes.) So, it's not, it's not a sudden turn. But as you look at our language (Yes.) over time, if you identify within the purposes of the Temple that emerging emphasis, and, and it, that it's not just a secular focus on justice or peacemaking, but it's actually a Christ-centered, uh, sense of mission coming right out of the life and ministry of Christ and then the church's, um, heritage as well as forward movement in relation to a growing concept of Zion, the church's seal, which has had the word piece of it for a long time reflecting that vision, then it's, it's there, it's, it's within us. Uh, now, uh, younger generations are telling us we really need to give voice and, and put legs (Yes.) and give hands to that emphasis and I think their right.

Linda Booth 29:36

Yes, I do, I do, too. It is foundational to who we are. It is in our DNA. It's just a matter of now enfleshing and living that out. You're exactly right. That's strategic outcome, outcome number one, Develop and empower church leaders and disciples, uh, who are often passionate about justice and peace issue leads us to your strategic outcome number two, Support local initiatives to create Christ-centered, Spirit-led communities that work for justice and peace. Tell us about that second strategic outcome or emphasis?

Steve Veazey 30:10

Well, um, I think that really, uh, is connected to what we just talked about. So, in response to individual and group discernment regarding where is God active, where's the Holy Spirit working in the world, um, people and, and groups are already developing expressions of the church that show the connection between Christ-centered spirituality, compassionate ministries, and justice and peacemaking, uh, aligned with the coming reign of God on earth. So, the good news is there, there are people who are, who are doing it. And, so, we perceive the role of leadership is to get next to them and support them, learn from them, encourage, um, and then in any ways we can to, to magnify their efforts, uh, to make sure that what they're doing can truly come to fruition and be sustained through all of the, uh, challenges, uh, and stresses that are involved, and disappointments sometimes involved in justice and peacemaking efforts. And, so, there's also, as you've alluded to this connection between the first emphasis of developing disciples and leaders, and this emphasis that says, Okay, we develop, inspire, motivate, equip disciples and leaders. And that will provide a, a larger base of people who will then, uh, engage in the formation of Christ-centered, Spirit-led communities that work for justice and peace. So,

the approach is expand the equipped, uh, inspired leadership base and that's how the mission of the church grows, um, and expands. Uh, so, that's the connection between the two.

Linda Booth 32:38

Yeah, you, you are, we are, we already have a base of people or a movement of people. And that's exciting to think about that movement getting larger and larger and having a greater impact in the world. You've also mentioned that there, there, there's already examples of innovative ministries and different kinds of groups that are forming meaningful relationships in Christ and working for justice and peace in their communities. Can you give us some examples of, of what that might look like or what they're doing?

Steve Veazey 33:10

Sure. Um, maybe some, some general descriptions and then some, some specific, tangible examples. So, there are groups that are, are building on their relationships that are developed at reunions and retreats and, and camps, which is one of the ways, a primary way Community of Christ does community building. Uh, but then they're using online technology to stay connected to each other, especially young adults who find those family camps, reunions, retreats, uh, to be their most meaningful church experiences of the, of the whole year. Well, now they're forming networks of relationships, a lot of them using online technology, um, to stay connected and to further develop their relationships and to participate in, in worship, spiritual formation, and talking about their calling, uh, as disciples wherever they, they live or work. And, and then some of them are adding a few more retreats to that experience. So, there's face to face as well as the online, uh, experience. And we're seeing that happen, uh, in several places. Um, and I think that's a very positive, uh, development. Uh, there are groups that have emerged, um, to spend time together, uh, talking about books, current issues, articles, what's in the news, and then deciding how they, as disciples and members of Community of Christ committed to this mission of proclaiming Christ and developing communities of joy, hope, love and peace, what they're going to do. So, in each example that I'm using, there is a connecting, a forming, and then discernment of how do we live that out either individually where people live and work or collectively in, in small groups that hear, uh, the call. Um, some specific examples, uh, here in the Kansas City area, a group of disciple members have joined, have formed and joined together in a, a Kansas City area justice and peace action team. Um, they come from different parts of the metro area. They have church participation, perhaps in different congregations. But now they have formed this network of common interest and calling that includes specific, what they would probably call peace works or peace actions related to international, national, or local concerns. So, so that's an example of church members forming a fresh expression that's co, community based, but it's action oriented. (Yes.) But it also pays appropriate attention to spiritual formation so that they can continue to grow.

Steve Veazey 37:11

A, another example, Um, this one has been going on longer, but it is expanding its vision now. And, and that's a, a group called CORD, Community One Resources Development, and it's in the Philippines. (Yes.) Um, and, uh, church members lead the efforts and they are engaged in holistic community development, not so much inside the church, but in the areas around. Uh, and so they are involved in community development that's focused on alleviating poverty, and then economic development in villages and communities. And they've recently added, and this, this is what I think is especially

important, what they call the healing of creation. (Ah.) So, they're, they're working on reforestation of some lands that have been clear cut or, or are eroding because there's no ground cover. They're planting trees. They're, they're looking at recycling practices. Um, one of the ones that, that I, uh, really enjoyed hearing about was a project where they collect the manure on the farms and they bring it into a sheltered building. They introduce earthworms, who process all of that manure and turn it in to fresh fertilizer which they then bag. They sell it to the farmers who are very grateful for the low price point at which that fertilizer can be bought. Um, and it has increased agricultural productivity. So, I, I, I call that Community of Christ manure at work. (I love it.) Even, even if it's manure, you can make something of it. (Yeah, you sure can.) There's a lot of meanings you can apply to that.

Linda Booth 39:40

Yeah, Christ can use everything right? Well, I received an email from, uh, John Hamer up in Toronto and, uh, he was telling me that, uh, they use, uh, peace and justice issues, spiritual formation, podcasts on a variety of different topics (Uh-hm.) and, um, and he said with the exception of the Catholic Church, Toronto congregation's YouTube channel now has more subscribers than any church in Canada, more than the United Church, the Anglicans, Presbyterians, more than any tech step, savvy at evangelical mega churches, and they have 3.3 million viewers, and it's climbing rapidly. And he, and he said that the best part about it is these people are able to get into community that's (. . .) (Yeah.) was, uh, with us without crossing the difficult barrier of, of, of, uh, being in church, (Right.) which (. . .) for some people, and that, that they've been watching these people gather in community and that, I mean, that's truly amazing (It is.) what technology can do when people are intentional in providing what people need, what are relevant and what people need in order to encourage their lives in to justice and peace making.

Steve Veazey 41:07

Yeah and then and then people network with each other and (Yeah.) it exponentially grows. It's relational. It's networking. Um, once you have a focus that is meaningful and, uh, important to people, yeah, great.

Linda Booth 41:23

Yeah. And he even says in this email, he said that there's so many people because they've been watching the lectures developing in community that one of the outcomes is that, is that they're, they're getting lots of requests to be confirmed members in Community of Christ which is pretty exciting, too.

Steve Veazey 41:45

Yep, that's the potential.

Linda Booth 41:47

It is. And now, I mean, each one of these strategic outcomes has really, uh, gotten me excited and made my mind working about what the possibilities are. Now, let's talk about strategic outcome number three, Accelerate the purpose of the Temple as an ensign of peace. And, of course, that reminds me of, uh, Section 156, paragraph five, in Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants with, which describes the purpose of the Temple. And I'm not going to read all of it, but I would encourage those who have a Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants to look up Section 156, paragraph five, which says, The

Temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the Spirit. It shall also be for the strengthening of faith and preparation for witness. By its ministries an attitude of wholeness of body, mind and spirit as a desirable end toward which to strive will be fostered. It shall be the means for providing leadership education for priesthood and members. And it shall be a place in which the essential meaning of the restoration as healing and redeeming agent is given new life and understanding, inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world. And in that paragraph, it was, well, it mentions as being an ensign to the world of the depth and breadth of the devotion of the saints. So, you talked about how through our history, uh, God has been pointing Community of Christ toward justice and peace making. And of course, the Temple, obviously, in its very beginning was dedicated to peace, reconciliation, healing of the Spirit, and so many other things that we've been talking about. I know this scripture was very formative to your leadership and ministry and used in the 2005 World Conference when you were ordained and set apart as Prophet/President of the church, uh, Christ's peace was the emphasis to you then and was lifted up to the church and it has always been a guiding principle in your leadership and an emphasis in your ministry. Pe, please tell us about, uh, this strategic outcome and its potential impact on discipleship, uh, congregations and mission centers.

Steve Veazey 44:22

Well, uh, in our experience as Community of Christ, we recognize that the Temple by its very design is a powerful symbol that unifies the church as well as sends the church into mission around the world. And it reflects our understanding of God as well as our understanding of the revelation of God and the life and ministry and mission of Jesus Christ, and it will continue to serve that purpose. And over the years, we've had various activities and programs and events related, uh, to that. Another function of the Temple is to be a center where innovation and creativity is, um, encouraged and tried. And ministries can be tested and, and refined. Um, and so we see that element of the Temple being emphasized in relation to its dedicated purpose to peace, reconciliation, healing of the spirit. Um, but here's the key going forward, to me that the evolution of broadcast and online technology now provides opportunities for us to connect with congregations anywhere, groups, persons, other organizations for networking purposes, um, that weren't there when the Temple were first dedicated. (Yeah.) But the vision of the Temple was in anticipation of such a time where those connections could be made, uh, and sustained, so that the ministries of the Temple, uh, could bless the whole church. And, so, I think we're now in a time, because of the technology available to us, that the Temple can, can really come to life, uh, and have a much broader impact on the church's understanding of its purpose and how to carry out that purpose, um, around the world. And that just creates many new opportunities for us.

Linda Booth 46:41

Boy, it sure does. Yeah, the Temple in the First Presidency priority paper, it says the Temple is a laboratory for spiritual formation, education, and justice and peacemaking ministries where research and experimentation can occur on what works best, what you just said, and it's a source of lessons learned to share with others around the world. Uh, and, and, so, the three major languages of the church, are you going to be able to provide that in the three primary languages of the church?

Steve Veazey 47:14

Yeah, we just had a discussion in the world church leadership council over the last several days that affirmed the importance of our translations capability, (Yeah.) um, and recognizing that everything has to be planned with that in mind from the beginning, (Yes.) rather than, um, developing something in English, and then say, Okay, how are we going to translate this? You (Yeah.) have to start with that assumption and then go from there in terms of development of the activity or. or ministry, so, we're striving to get to that level of being able to connect and communicate.

Linda Booth 47:58

Yes, that's wonderful. And you've, you've mentioned some of the challenges that are, uh, facing you as you, uh, look to the future with these strategic outcomes. Um, even as the challenges that you and leaders face, how is your level of hope for the church's future?

Steve Veazey 48:17

Well, I, uh, my hope is, is always there. Um, it's the nature of my faith, uh, my sense of connection to, to God. Um, my daily attempts to understand and see how God is active in the world. Um, I, I guess the best way to describe where I am, I, I'm realistic, I'm realistic about the challenges to the church during this time in history with so much upheaval and, and questioning and shifts in the culture that are impacting us and certainly other church. So, I'm realistic about the challenges, but I'm hopeful about the possibilities, uh, that are coming, uh, as a result of God's activity in, in the world. And I think Community of Christ figures in to what God is doing and, and will be doing, uh, in relation to the coming Kingdom, (Yeah.) or reign of God.

Linda Booth 49:39

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Steve, for taking the time. I know you have a World Church Leadership Council meeting this afternoon that you're getting ready to prepare for in about an hour. I, I'm especially thankful for your willingness to be connected to, uh, the Holy Spirit, uh, to use daily practices and intentional listening to where God is leading the church. And I'm very thankful from the very beginning of your ministry that you have pointed the church towards peace and justice as a way in which we can live out and bring to pass the Kingdom here on earth, God's reign. And I thank you Coffee Buzz listeners for joining our conversation. I hope you have felt the challenge and have been inspired that you are the church's strategy and you are the ones to en flesh, uh, Christ's mission and love and compassion throughout the world. Uh, Coffee Buzz listeners, please watch for next month's episode of Coffee Buzz. I'll be having a conversation with Stassi Cramm, counselor to Prophet/President Steve Veazey.

Josh Mangelson 50:57

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