

**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 with the series Percolating on Faith, where we discuss deep and important theological matters. And we never have any fun at all. There is no place for fun in theology.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 00:50**

Maybe where you are doing it, Carla. But, where we sit, it is fun.

**Carla Long 00:54**

That's right. I'm Carla Long your host. And we actually do have a lot of fun when talking about theology. I'm here on this series with Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith, two people who know way more than I do. Welcome back, Charmaine and Tony.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:08**

Well, we're glad to be back.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 01:09**

Nice, Carla. Nice to be with you again.

**Carla Long 01:13**

It's always a pleasure, I really do enjoy talking about theology with you guys. I don't always enjoy talking. Well, that's not true. I enjoy talking about theology. And usually, we can have fun with it. Because God probably has a sense of humor, right?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:25**

I'm pretty sure of it, we don't have to look far to notice that we're counting on it, Carla.

**Carla Long 01:29**

Please, God, have a sense of humor. So today, we're going to be talking about the sacraments in Community of Christ and the sacraments are really important to us. It's for me, I would say that the, the sacraments for us are kind of like, touchpoints between God and ourselves. And they use just like ordinary objects, everyday objects, bread, and hands and oil to try and symbolize these much, much deeper theological ideas. So, we're going to talk about the sacraments today, I think this will be the first of two podcasts that we're going to be doing, talking about the sacraments because there's actually a lot to talk about, which is kind of surprising. So, Tony and Charmaine, let's just jump right into it. What are the sacraments in Community of Christ?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:23**

Well, I think, before we go into the specific ones, I think it'd be probably good to talk about different definitions of sacraments, or sacrament. And I think Tony's got one, but I'm going to give some as well. So, um, I would describe sacraments as ways in which God or Christ's Spirit wants to interact with us. And like you said, in the everyday kinds of things, symbols and objects, you know, whether it's hands or oil. So, ways in which God wants to interact with us, and in a way of looking at sacraments as a reinforcing of God's message to us, as individuals and especially as a body, as a community and that if we look closely at the sacraments, they express something of the character of God. So, I think those are some different angles.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 03:32**

So, I think, you know, what I would simply add to that is the word, the word sacrament is not in the Bible. That's an early Christian term that was used to describe these rites that emerged in the church very early. In fact, some of these rites go back to Jesus Himself. And kind of a standard definition for a sacrament in Christian theology is that it's a visible, tangible sign of an invisible and spiritual grace. That's a very common definition. And so, I loved your word, touchpoint Carla, that is the sacraments all in some physical tangible way, point to the invisible presence of an infinite God, who relates to us by grace, they actually help make that grace present or visible to us, or imaginable to us and make it in some respects efficacious, so that we can lay, you know, lay hold of it. Um, the term sacrament comes from a Latin term, that originally in the Roman Empire had to do with an oath, an oath summons for to be faithful. And so, the very term sacramentum in Latin conveyed a sense of covenant or agreement, but in the Greek tradition, the word that was used for sacraments was musterion, the mysteries. That is, it was always understood that these rights were not magic rights in any way, but that they pointed to something infinitely transcendent beyond the right itself. So, for example, in the Lord's Supper, what's, what's present there is Christ Himself, pointing back to the story of his life, death and resurrection, and his own invisible presence to the church. So, it's mysterious in that way. And it's really important to remember that sacraments all have an element of deep, profound mystery around them.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:46**

Good. And I just wanted to clarify, Tony, to be a little more clarifying is that you are saying, in the Greek early Christian church, the Eastern Church, the idea of mystery is particularly profound. Yeah,

**Tony Chvala-Smith 06:06**

very much so, in terms of theology, Community of Christ theology aligns very much with the mainstream of Christian theology here, and that sacraments, connect us and point us to some aspect of the incarnation is that the Word became flesh, in Jesus Christ. And so, in that regard, baptism unites us to his life and his death and his resurrection. The Lord's supper unites us to his death and points us to head to the dawning kingdom. And on we go, confirmation connects us to his breathing of the Spirit on the disciples. And so, we can go through each of the sacraments and say in what respect connects to the incarnation that God's eternal Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ? So, ask them about what are our sacraments? Well, I just named a few of them and Community of Christ celebrates eight sacraments.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 07:09

Okay, and so we'll start with baptism. And we see baptism in Community of Christ is by immersion, typically, and with the idea that baptism is a commitment to be a follower of Christ, so that as Christ was baptized, so then are we but also additional to that is the idea of being buried and raised in Christ, that we then partake, have him in our lives and partake of kingdom of God, that He was the sign of, and that he pointed towards

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 07:57

Confirmation, which follows baptism is a sacrament, that that actually developed in the early church. There are a few places in the New Testament where the disciples, for example, laid on hands after baptism, but other places where they didn't, eventually in the Christian Church of the third century, confirmation became a separate, right, that was connected to baptism, but different from it. And we can say that the term confirmation in confirmation, we don't get the Spirit because the Spirit is already enabled the whole process of redemption to this point, actually, it confirms the presence of the Spirit at work in the person's life. And it confirms their commitment to the visible community of the church.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 08:47

Yeah, in a way, confirmation is a person's consent to be to the ministry of the Spirit more fully in their lives. It's like opening a door. And in an in Community of Christ, confirmation is done by two elders, with laying on of hands and a prayer.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 09:10

So, the next sacrament would be the Lord's Supper, which we commonly refer to as communion or the Lord's Supper. In a few places in the church, you might hear people use the word Eucharist. It's not commonly used, but it is used. We typically do not use the term sacrament for as what's common in our tradition, we refer to it as the Lord's Supper usually, and the Lord's Supper. Though in our tradition, it's often connected to a remaking of your baptismal covenant. In reality, the Lord's Supper is not first about us. It's about Christ. It recalls Jesus' last night with his disciples. It recalls his death on behalf of the suffering world, and it recalls his resurrection and so when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are taken back into remembering the central event of redemption, and then renewing ourself to live in the light of that redemption.

**Carla Long** 10:09

Oh, no. So, my mother was wrong. Say, well, one time, you know, when the priest was passing this serving as the communion, I asked mom, you know, there's beautiful music playing, and it was really, really nice and everybody's quiet. And I asked mom, what should I be doing right now? And Mom, Mom told me that I should be thinking about how I could be better next month. And then and pointed at me it said, especially you?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 10:42

Well, well, mom.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:45**

Well, that might be the natural response to the ministry of the Lord's Supper is to have that renewed focus and desire to follow Christ in new and deeper ways. But that's further down the line. Yeah, in priorities

**Tony Chvala-Smith 11:02**

In some ways what we're going to keep coming back to in our discussion with you, Carla, is that the sacraments are primarily about the identity of God, who is this God, who is this Father, Son, and Spirit who is reaching out to the human race? And so, our human tendency is always to turn this back to, oh, what can I do? What should I do? What must I do to make it more and more about us when in fact, it's theologically more proper, and more actually, whole and helpful to be thinking, who is God in all of this?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:36**

So, the next of the sacraments we're going to mention is marriage. And I think it's always helpful for us to remember that in, in this country, and in some others, the church is given the opportunity to legally solemnize marriages on behalf of the government, but when it comes to what is the role of the church, in marriage, besides that part that in some places is the church is authorized to to acknowledge recognize the legal commitment, that we see the sacrament of marriage as being a place to look at relationship. And to say, not only are we speaking to and bringing attention to the love that these people have for each other, but recognizing that God is the author of love, and that in marriage, in a, in a religious landscape and in a religious service, that what's happening here is not only a commitment of the two people to each other, but also their commitment to God in inviting God's help, strength, love, those gifts of forgiveness and desire to know, to know each other, respect each other more deeply, asking God for help in doing that in our relationships, so, so again, there's still the idea of God being the ground or the author, of love, and a help in our relationships.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 13:39**

In some way, not, not all Christian churches see marriage as a sacrament. And I think when Charmaine and I do marriage, prep and do weddings, one of the things that we try to emphasize is that it's not the wedding service, per se, it's the marriage that is a sacrament, meaning this, this relationship, this union for life of two people, is a place where the community you develop can become transparent to the kingdom of God, can become transparent to values of equality and mutuality and justice and upholding each other. And so, there's a sacramental character to the relationship that we try to hold up in Community of Christ.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:28**

Right. And I would probably add in just another little piece, and that is with in Community of Christ, ministers are free to do marriages of people who are not members of the Church, as well as those who are or you know, couples where one is, and one isn't. There's no pressure to be a member of the church in order for there to be a wedding led by one of our ministers. So, this is a sacrament that is for those in the church as well as those outside the church. And if both people are, are not members, that's fine too. So,

**Tony Chvala-Smith 15:15**

and the same would be true of the next sacrament blessing of children. One does not have to be a member of Community of Christ to have one's infants blessed, and so the blessing of children is, of course, taken from Jesus blessing little kids in, you can find it in the middle part of Mark's gospel in chapter nine and ten. And so this, this is a way of identifying God's special love for children, and of upholding the child before the community. The blessing of children theoretically, is not just about the child, it's about the community too. It's about a community being a safe and welcoming place for children to grow. So that's part of that sacrament.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:04**

Another is ordination. And in Community of Christ. ordination is, is, I'd say the last step, but the actual prayer of ordination is only partway through the process of our priesthood process. So, it's preceded by leaders, whether that be a pastor or Mission Center president or others in the church sensing a call for that person, that call being brought to others in leadership roles. Eventually, if, if that call is affirmed in in by several people, then that call is brought back to the individual for their decision about whether or not they feel and for their discernment to see whether or not this is a commitment they're wanting to make or ready to make in their life. And then, there are usually three classes that are needed to be taken before the actual ordination. And one is on scripture, one is on the ministry of that particular priesthood role or ministry role and the other is on the nature of ministry. And once those are completed, then an ordination service happens. And ordinations can be done by priests and elders and those in in high priesthood offices as well, depending on what depending on the office, right, so. So, the people ordaining need to be of the office, being ordained, or in the Melchizedek priesthood, I guess that'd be a good way to define that. So

**Tony Chvala-Smith 18:15**

I think once again, the sacrament of ordination is it's only partly about the individual being called its again about the church and about the presence of Christ in the church to sustain it through new callings to ministry. So that's, that's pretty important. The next one is what we used to call the laying on of hands for the sick. But often it's simply referred to as administration, in the church, meaning the administration of oil and the laying on of hands. And one does not have to be sick, right, to ask for this sacrament, but it involves elders, placing a drop of consecrated oil on the person's head, laying on hands and offering a prayer, asking God's blessing. Charmaine and I did one of these just about a week ago, and very wonderful experience. So, this, of course, is a takeoff of or based on Jesus's ministry of healing. And then in Mark chapter six, Jesus sends the apostles out with oil to continue his ministry of healing.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:22**

And this is one of the sacraments that I think is particularly about the Incarnation, about, about Christ made flesh and being in our midst with the idea that the church, the ongoing group of followers of Christ, in His name, offer these blessings of the Spirit into people's lives, in whatever circumstances they might be. And as Tony said, it's this isn't just about being sick and being prayed for. This is also about you know, are there times of struggle? Is someone dealing with some emotional issues or feeling overwhelmed by the press of life? Are there struggles that that are becoming burdensome for someone, and they are succumbing to hopelessness, all kinds of things, that times in which we need to be

reminded that God is with us. And that even though things may be difficult, it does not mean we're beyond the reach of God, even though we may have made mistakes. We've done an administration in prison. And, again, the idea that Christ desires to be with us, wherever we are in life, whether in times of joy or in times of struggle. So, it has a wide-ranging set of circumstances in which it can be used and should be used. Sometimes people are hesitant to ask for administration because it's like, well, I must, I have to be really sick before I call for the elders. And, and I hope that we're getting past that a little bit. And that people become more comfortable. Just a thing about how administrations are done, they're usually done in more private settings, though, occasionally, administration may be done in a worship service for an individual, or a couple, or family, or there might be a whole worship service that is based on administration being available to whomever might want to have that. So, there's different ways in which it's used for individuals. And then also in corporate worship.

**Carla Long 21:59**

Actually, I have a small story about being administered to when I was very little, I was, I had some really bad stomach aches for a long, long time when I was five, or six or something. And mom and dad had me administered to at reunion. And I immediately started burping after that, and I felt better, and somebody had asked me, they're like, Carla, you know, I know something about the administration. And I told them that Jesus made me burp, and it made me better. And I don't think administration always works that way for people. But it worked that way for me, I don't even know how.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:35**

absolutely, sometimes simply asking for help and letting someone come and be that help opens the door for things that couldn't have happened otherwise. You know, I think about I was a teenager, and I was at a Wednesday evening per service, and I was having a starting a migraine. And the problem was that we were leaving right after the service and driving through the night somewhere. And so, I actually asked for administration, though, I was always kind of shy about doing that. And in, in the midst of it, there was just this warmth, that starting at my head just kind of came over me. And within a half an hour the migraine was gone, and I had no more recurrence of it for the trip that followed. So, there's just so many, t's what I like to think of administration as a mystery. That it simply opens the door to whatever it is God wants to bless us with and, you know, unless we open the door, the blessing doesn't have a place to go. So, I tend to think of it that way.

**Carla Long 24:09**

And understanding that healing comes in many, many, many ways.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 24:14**

Yeah, yeah. And,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:15**

and that's another thing. I'm sorry, I'm going to jump in, again, about administration because there's this tendency sometimes for people to say, well, if I was administered to and I wasn't healed immediately, then it didn't work, you know, or someone's to blame. Someone didn't have enough faith. But that's another thing that I've been really appreciative of in Community of Christ in the last few decades, is the recognition that Spirit healing through administration, spiritual healing, emotional healing, physical

healing, they're all processes. And, you know, if we're having problems with some physical ailment, we're not just going to go to the doctor once and if it doesn't work or if it doesn't get completely well say, well, we tried it and it didn't happen. So, we're just not going to go to a doctor again. But that it's a process. And so, we will often encourage people to think of administration not as a onetime thing, but especially when it has to do with life circumstances and emotional issues, to think of administration as a support for the long haul. And to perhaps think of asking for it once a week, as a as a way of continuing to ask to recognize that we want and need God's help in our lives.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 25:42**

Yeah, there's no limit on the number of times one can ask elders for administration. So, the eighth sacrament is the evangelist blessing. And this is an easy one for Charmaine to talk about, because she's an evangelist, and she's sitting right next to me, and she can talk about the sacrament a lot.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:59**

Well, this is one of the ones that has undergone a lot of evolution within Community of Christ, particularly in the last, I think, 20 to 25 years. And, before the ordination of women, it was called a patriarchal blessing. And it tended to be more focused on, as it might sound, like a fatherly blessing from a patriarch, an ordained patriarch in the church, providing insights from God or encouragement from God for an individual. And up until about 20 years ago, 15 years ago, it was usually considered a onetime sacrament in someone's life, that you would, unless there were extenuating circumstances that you would typically have just one patriarchal blessing. But that has really opened up in the church with the idea that God wants to bless us in all times, in all periods of our life. And so, the idea of an ongoing life blessing is something that has emerged in the church where you can go to an evangelist, and in consultation and working together, over a period of time, have a blessing. So, we'll probably say a little bit more about this later, but in an evangelist blessing, at least, this is kind of where we're headed as a church, in our view of evangelist blessings is that it's not just a onetime deal where you would say to an evangelist, I want a blessing and it happens right away. But that the preparation for the blessing is as important as the as the actual prayer itself. And the preparation typically, is anywhere from, you know, five or six meetings together, to in some cases, a year preparation. And that's how I tend to do it is that meet with someone, once a month for a year. We talk about, what are their spiritual interests? Where do they want to grow spiritually? What is their understanding of God, how would like they like to expand their relationship with God, and then we work from there to, you know, maybe to practice different kinds of prayer or to learn about different kinds of meditation, or to do some scripture study or some reading together, and let those things deepen the person's own desire and steps to deepening their relationship with God. So that first part, the preparation for the blessing is really, really important that the individual's desire to connect with God in deeper ways, is honored and expanded on and then the second element is the actual prayer itself, which is typically just the person and evangelist and a recording device. So, then the blessing is recorded. And then sometime later, the blessing is transcribed and printed out and then sent to the recipient. So, there's three really three different stages and they all have their own their own benefits, I would say. So, evangelist blessings, I would say blessings now, because though it started out as blessing for an individual that has expanded to be able to do blessings for congregations. And that's been happening for some time now, where often two or three or more evangelists will work with a congregation over a period of time, often several months or a year, for the congregation to discern how they want to deepen their relationship, as an entity, as a congregation, to God's work in

their life, and in their midst. And then a blessing is offered in a worship service for the congregation. So, and then, most recently, just in the last year or two, the opportunities for a blessing to be offered with a particular group of people, not necessarily a congregation, but a coherent group, who is seeking God's blessing in some way, or for a family. So, there's, some differing and expanding understandings of what evangelist blessings can be. So those are

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 31:31

the eight sacraments that we celebrate in Community of Christ. And each of them has three distinctive parts, there is a sign which is the visible tangible part. So, for example, bread and grape juice, or rings, or laying on of hands, or water for baptism or oil. So, there's the sign and then the word has to do with Jesus's own commissioning of this event in some way. So even with the evangelist blessing, there's a story in the Gospels where Jesus says he's prayed for Peter, and that would be an example of the word part of that particular sacrament. And then the third part is a covenant. So, in order for some rite to be a sacrament, officially, it has to have a sign, a word, a covenant in Community of Christ theology. And so, these are the eight.

**Carla Long** 32:30

Oh, that's really interesting. I don't know, if I had really put together the sign word and covenant, there is something else I want to bring up, Tony, that you touched on just a little bit. And that is that almost all of our sacraments are open to nonmembers. Except for ordination, you need to be a member of Community of Christ in order to be ordained to a priesthood office. And we have an open communion, which means if you've made a covenant with Christ in some way you can partake of our emblems. And but in kind of confirmation, you kind of have to be moving towards membership in order to want to do that. But you don't have to be a member to have your children blessed, to get married, to have administration or an evangelist blessing, which I think is really awesome, that people can participate in these, like I called them before touchpoints with God, without having to join us. They don't have to join us.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 33:32

Right. So that points back again, to our theology of sacrament, which is the sacrament is first about the character and nature of God. It's not about us, we happen to be the recipients or the mediators of it in some in some way. But it's really about who God is, God is inclusive, God is present in and through all things, who wishes all to keep journeying into the infinite voyage into knowing God's love for them. So yeah, why wouldn't they be open?

**Carla Long** 34:03

I think that's beautiful. I don't think that's true and every other denomination, so I think that's really cool for us to do that. So, my next question is about why did we choose like, Jesus did a lot of things in his life, you know, like Jesus walked everywhere, why isn't walking everywhere one of our sacraments, you know, how did you choose those eight things to become our sacraments? Like, for instance, washing of feet, I think is a sacrament, or an ordinance in some denominations. Why did we not choose that one for ours? I don't know. Sure.



**Tony Chvala-Smith 34:40**

Yeah. Well, you have to distinguish make it make a distinction here, and theologians love to make distinctions, but distinction between a right that is a sacrament and an activity that is sacramental. So, we have a little stray cat that sort of has adopted us and if I go out on the porch at evening and sit, she'll sometimes come and sit in my lap. That's not a sacrament of the church. But it's an experience that can become kind of luminous or open ended to the presence of God and all things. So, there's all kinds of things that can be sacramental. But the number eight is not some kind of magic number. And we never once had a conference or a formal decision. It's sort of what has just evolved over time, these eight rights have emerged over time as reliable, repeatable ways to come into the presence of God. And all of them have grounding in Scripture and have a long track record in our experience. By the way we have eight sacraments, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy of seven. Our eighth would be the evangelist blessing. Lots of Protestants have two, but all Christians agree that baptism and the Eucharist or Lord's supper are the two central primary sacraments. But yeah, we didn't really just choose eight, I guess I would say they chose us.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:11**

But and I think it's important to, you know, kind of go back to the context in which the restoration movement began, and to recognize that this emerged out of a Protestant context, primarily. And so, baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, ordination, would have been activities that would have had importance within the world experience that the first church members would have had. And so those would have probably unquestioningly been seen as important elements within the life of any church or sect. And so, I think those happen quite naturally. Things like blessing of children, I think, again, it's influenced, I would say, by some of the images and language of within Catholicism of christening and administration to the sick, again, for those in the earliest church who might have been aware of what's the term because Catholic term of final rights, Extreme Unction is accurate term, thank you. But that idea of prayer, a bit more formalized prayer, perhaps, than other Protestants would have been using in the time when it came to praying for the sick. But you know, very much, I think, influenced by it's by our historical context, though, it's been kind of interesting to see that, you know, different changes that have happened over time. With some of these I mentioned some about the evangelist blessing, but our, our understanding of confirmation of baptism, and there are different ways of doing baptism and confirmation, in the last decade or so. Our understanding of blessing of children is changed. And yeah, lots of lots of room for the Spirit to keep teaching us.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 38:36**

But by the way, in the Catholic tradition, the number seven for sacraments was not really formalized until about the 12th century, or 13th century. The theologian Peter Lombard in the 12th century was the first one to say, okay, these seven things we've been of all the things we've been doing. These really are the sacraments of the church. And then in the 13th century, they were essentially kind of formalized as the seven. But in the early Christian church, there were lots of things that functioned as mysteries, for example, there was a practice of the baptismal candidate after baptism, being sprinkled with salt, to remind them of being the salt of the earth and so on, that was considered sacramental, like say, in the fourth century, in some places, as for as for the washing of feet, that's a tricky one. It is celebrated in Community of Christ informally, often in our experience, it's been it's the kind of thing that might be celebrated after a unique a unique period of time together a small group, for example, at a retreat, or a

youth camp or something like that. It seems to have the markings of a sacrament for example, in John's Gospel, Jesus does it so it originates in his practice, and you could say he commands it and there's the sign of the water and the towel. And in a sense, there's a kind of a covenant involved. But on the other hand, most Christians typically have not seen it as a sacrament, just because it's much more symbolic of how Christians are always supposed to act towards each other. We're not very good at that. But it's not it's not an act that's directly connected to either creation or redemption. So, one, I think one could argue that it definitely has sacramental character quality. It's just been not typical to call it a sacrament.

**Carla Long 40:39**

Oh, well, that's very helpful. Thank you. Well, I appreciate this whole conversation. It's been really enlightening. Um, as many of our listeners know, I live in Salt Lake City, and we have a Community of Christ presence in Salt Lake City. And a lot of times I get asked a lot of questions from people of the LDS faith or people who are leaving the LDS faith. So, I'm just going to ask you guys some of these questions. And so, I might just be firing them at you. The first one is why does Community of Christ, why do we use the word sacrament instead of an ordinance? Because I think in the LDS church, it's the word ordinance.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 41:21**

Yeah. Well, once upon a time, in our church, let's say let's go back 60 years, it was much more common to refer to the ordinances and Sacraments and put the emphasis on the ordinances, and that the use of the term sacrament was kind of secondary. And part of that was a holdover from Joseph Smith Jr's time, it was a holdover of the ideology of being the one true church. And it was about our rightness and uniqueness and all that.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:57**

I'd say that in, in some ways, when there was a distinction made between an ordinance and a sacrament the term ordinance was used for those practices that had to be done in the right way, in order to have any effect, and it had to be done in the right church. So, I think that was sometimes the distinction that was made. But the first priesthood class that I took, had an older article in it, and the very first thing it said about sacraments was making this distinction between what an ordinance was and what a sacrament was, or which of the sacraments were ordinances. And, and I never really got it very well, I obviously didn't change my language. I didn't start calling some ordinances and some sacraments. But that was also at a time, when as a church, we were not using the term ordinances much. Tony did a little research today by talking with Peter Judd, who presently volunteers in the church, but was an apostle and then a counselor to the president of the church and has done a lot of writing and thinking about the sacraments. So, Tony called him today. Well, he and his wife, Chris, were, are on vacation. And he very generously offered us some time and some insights on how that's changed in the church.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 43:38**

It's almost an unforgivable sin to call two very busy people on vacation, and ask one of them, can you talk to me about sacraments. But Peter was very gracious, and Peter has a top-notch theological mind. So, he wrote a book in 1978, called the sacraments. And when you look at that book, you'll see that the

language of ordinances is completely absent from it. But if you back up 25 years to 1962, a very popular book in the church by Yale and Brockway was called Ordinances and Sacraments of the Church. And what you see there's the term ordinance is really important. And the authors are, are kind of nervous around the term sacrament. So, in that, in that space of, what, 16 years or so, some major shifts in Community of Christ theology took place, and one of the shifts was away from ordinance language. And Peter said there was never a, there was never really a like formal decision. It was that people like him, were studying sacramental theology in other contexts with other Christians. And they increasingly found the term sacrament to be much more appropriate and productive and much more theologically rich, and much more open to the idea of divine grace, whereas the term ordinance kept dragging us back to the idea that somehow, we have these, these, the relate the divine in the relationship is all about the rules and following procedures. And there's, there's just no grace in that. And so, you know, Peter said that, you know, by the time he wrote this book in 1978, the shift was already well underway away from ordinance language. So today, we don't use the language at all, or very, very seldom, we find the term sacrament much more theologically significant and ecumenically appropriate. And it's representative of that key shift in our theology, towards divine grace and love as the heart of sacraments and the heart of the divine human encounter. And away from the idea that somehow these rights are human actions that have to follow a list of very finely detailed rules, that somehow that guarantees something else, like salvation or whatever.

**Carla Long 46:08**

You know, that reminds me of two things actually, like one as a bishop. Of course, I'm always thinking about the disciples' generous response when people might give of their money during the service. And we stopped calling it the collection to, you know, because collection kind of just refers to like, oh, gosh, now's the time, I have to give money again, rather than rather than looking at it holistically, and seeing that the Church gives us, and God gives us so much we can give back. And so like, it's, it's a much broader theological topic than just, I guess I have to give money to the church again, so that the changing of the wording is really important. And then I jumped into section 162, of our Doctrine & Covenants, verse one, D. And it says, Tony, basically exactly what you're saying, you have already been told to look to the sacraments to enrich the spiritual life of the body. It is not the form of the sacrament that dispenses grace. But it is the divine presence that gives life, be respectful of tradition, and sensitive to one another. But do not be unduly bound by interpretations and procedures that no longer fit the needs of a worldwide church, in such matters direction will come from those called to lead. And so that's what it reminded me of, you know, like, it doesn't matter the form, the form of the ordinance seemed to be like primary, oh, yes, but now it's like, let's make sure that we are understanding and celebrating the character of God in this rather than making sure that every piece of bread is cut perfectly.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:53**

Yeah, it's really about the sacraments, again, being those pointers back to Christ back to God. And it's not about us, it's not about us individually, it's not about the church. First and foremost, it is about God.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 48:08**

Yeah, and, you know, moving in the direction we've going is moving away from kind of, I'd say, a much more like magical view of the sacraments, that was part of our traditions in the start, where you had to

get everything just right. And we've heard plenty of stories of people who, who these are not older stories, but people who were present at a baptism, when you know, somebody's finger didn't get fully immersed, and the baptism had to be done over. And when we think about it, that is a legalistic focus on form, that kind of misses the Spirit of the actual, natural symbolism of the event. It's as if there's still a belief there that, oh, my gosh, if we don't do it over, that person's finger will not enter into eternal life or something like that. It's a highly magical and mechanistic view of sacraments, I would say it's

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 49:04

very legalistic to and again, that somehow, it's about the church doing it right. And, and, rather than it being about this being a sign of God's loving acceptance and grace, that's a huge difference with how you then approach the sacraments, absolutely.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 49:26

Behind that is a kind of a ledger book image of God. This God was, is tracking everything in the ledger book and making sure that you've got all of your eyes dotted and your T's crossed. And that seems so out of character for when you take the story of redemption. In broad terms, it's way out of character with that story.

**Carla Long** 49:52

Yeah, it absolutely is. Okay, here's more questions that I usually get. Why does Community of Christ only have communion on the first Sunday of the month, so in community Christ tradition, we take communion, either on the first Sunday of the month, or during perhaps a special time at reunion at our family camp or at camp. But why do we do that? Why don't we celebrate communion every single Sunday?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 50:17

Yeah. And the thing is that at different times, in our past, there have been different practices, and particularly in the time between, oh 1844 and probably as late as 1890. So, with the fragmentation of the church, and then with the beginnings of the reorganization, starting in the late 40s, and early 50s, there was more kind of isolation between groups, different groups did it differently. And so then, when the reorganization started in a very formal in a more cohesive group, by 1860, here you have a whole bunch of people kind of coming together under the leadership of Joseph Smith, III, and they're coming with their various practices, and there was some confusion and discontent among people who were kind of judging each other's way of doing it. And eventually, it became it was recommended by the presidency that we go to a once a month expression of communion, and that it, that it be the on the first Sunday as much as possible. Again, not super legalistic about it, but recommendations, and even some more discussion happening later. And you can find some of this and in the Doctrine and Covenants, where it talks about when in the service should communion happen, you know, should it be before the sermon or after the sermon? And so there has been continuing discussion in the church about that. So that's how we got to where we are now.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 52:30

That's not revelation. It's just like a sensible practice. But as a tradition, it's very flexible. You already mentioned that communion can be celebrated, at all kinds of special events. And yeah, so it's just kind of, I don't know, it's kind of what we do. But it's open. It's open to revision all the time.

**Carla Long** 52:54

And it has been revised just recently, we changed some of the wording of our prayers from Section 17 of the Doctrine & Covenants to become more inclusive. Right. We have because we just recently had open communion. Oh, not recently, Gosh, how long ago was that now?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 53:13

1994

**Carla Long** 53:14

No way.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 53:15

Yes, way. Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 53:20

It depends how old you are it whether it was recent or not

**Carla Long** 53:24

Weren't the 90s just last decades?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 53:28

You know, when you say it that way, Carla, that kind of enters you into our decades if you

**Carla Long** 53:34

sad but true. It's true. So, we have changed how we look at communion a lot lately. Another question I get, why do we use grape juice instead of water?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 53:46

Oh, and I think that one of the primary reasons is that we would have been affected again, by our context of what did other Christians tend to use for their emblems or their symbols? When our church was beginning and, you know, in those first decade or so, so we adopted the idea of we could say bread and wine, but following the good tradition of the Methodists, who did not drink alcohol using grape juice and bread. So, I would say that was typical of the time and it was something that we adopted, but we there are many expressions throughout the church of different things that can be used for communion. So, when we were in Tahiti, we were staying with a family who was going to be in charge of the communion emblems the next day. And so, what they would do is they would put raisins to soak and so the wine, or the juice for that day would actually be raisin juice. And in some places in Tahiti where there may not be other kinds of juices, they would use coconut water. And so, it's, again, going back to the idea of not being legalistic about this, it's not the emblem itself, that it has meaning it's what it represents what it points to. And so, you know, often in, in a communion tray, today, you will see

grape juice, but you'll also see water for people who can't have grape juice. And so it's not as important what it is, as that it's part of a service that is pointing to God, and it's letting the liquid, whatever kind of liquid it might be, and the bread, or the corn chip, or the rice cake, or whatever it might be, be representative of the body, and the blood of Christ, of God's action in the world of God's love being offered to us, and our willingness to take it in. So that's what really matters.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 56:23**

And some of that flexibility actually goes back to Joseph Smith, Jr. himself, who, in an early section of the Doctrine & Covenants, I'm just going to have to paraphrase here since I don't have it right at hand, said something like it matters not what you eat or drink in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, what matters is the intention with which you do it. And so, on that grounds alone, we can use other substances for the elements. There's a level of sacramental theology, there is also on the other end of this a sense in which what you use should be in some sense, appropriate, right? And so, so we're not, we're not going to baptize somebody in like corn syrup. It's a liquid and it's clear, you know, it's not water. And so grape juices are really, in a teetotaling Church of grape juice is a really appropriate substitute for wine, which is what Jesus and his disciples used. They used alcohol, we should be honest about that. But in our, in our context, grape juice is quite appropriate. And there's room for other stuff,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 57:34**

and it approximates and represents again, as close as possible, the original intent, but that is not what is essential in the sacrament.

**Carla Long 57:45**

And again, it's not the form, of the sacrament that dispenses grace. So, okay. Why does Community of Christ traditionally not serve children under the age of eight? Communion? Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:02**

So actually, this has been an item that has been quite in some areas quite hotly debated and lots of discussion over it, particularly as we opened up communion to those from other traditions, who may have infant baptism and or for people who have made a commitment to Christ, but perhaps have not been baptized in their tradition where that may not be required. But as a church, our understanding of baptism is still the idea of a believer's baptism, that within, within our denomination, we affirm that, that those who are making that commitment should have some knowledge of what they're doing. And so, by the age of eight, by that point, they have had an opportunity, hopefully to be involved in the life of the church, they can read, and they can write so they can be taught about what is baptism, what does it mean to be a follower of Christ? They have some abilities to know a lot yet but a beginning, to be able, have the ability to conceptualize, to be able to think about what is a commitment? How do I live this out? What decisions can I make? And so, because of that long tradition of having a believer's baptism, there's the sense to prepare those who are going to be baptized with the knowledge that they would need to, to make that commitment of their own freewill. Of course, the reality is that at times children go along with the expectations of the adults around them, and may want to be baptized, because that's what's expected or because they want the bread and the juice, they want grandpa to baptize them, or, yeah, it might be about being the center of you know, those kinds of things. But in the best

circumstances, this is an opportunity to give young disciples the chance to choose to be to let discipleship shape who they are, and to, for them to become a disciple of their own choice. So that's part of why we wait until after eight or, or after baptism for children, for them to take the communion so that there is an opportunity for them to have a clearer understanding of what they're doing. Because if people know what it is that they are partaking of what it represents, then it has more effect on them. It, it can have a more real effect. So that that would be you know, but on the other hand, and that's part of the whole debate that's going on about is it okay, if our kids who are younger than eight take communion, because their friends who may be a member of another church and who were baptized previously, or who have made a commitment to Christ that doesn't require baptism are taking, again, our, my hope is that we would not be too legalistic or do any violence to people and say, you know, slap their hands, when they're reaching for the bread and say, well, how old are you and have you been baptized? But that I have my hope is that we can always point back to is this communion is for those who have made a commitment to Christ, and to let that be the beginning point. With even with our own children who are not yet baptized, but that's just me on that one. So, but it's a it's a really good debate for the church to be having, we're looking at what is the nature of communion? What is the nature of commitment? What is necessary to know before you're baptized? And how can a group of people assist those who want to become followers of Christ in the best way, so it's, it's full of all kinds of opportunities to go deeper.

**Carla Long 1:02:55**

It sure is. And when I was a child, I definitely could not take communion before the age of eight. But thank goodness for grandma, who always had crackers, and I'm pretty sure she borrowed from the Pizza Hut salad bar. She could give them to me, so I wouldn't feel too terribly left out.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:03:17**

And that's the cool thing. I mean, there are some congregations that help children understand why it is that you know, our own children of member's families, don't take communion by speaking about it, and by having a little snack kind of thing. And in the Eastern Orthodox Church, in the Greek Orthodox Church, they have, Tony's going to remember the name before, antidoron, which is a cake, it's a bread, they call it a bread, but it's more like a sweet bread it's more like a cake texture that is offered to all who are there, the bread and wine are for members, and everybody comes up, and even the smallest baby who has been baptized, they all partake of that. But they want to be inclusive. And so, they have this antidoron bread that they offer to each person who is there near the end of the service to acknowledge the body of Christ, beyond their own denomination, so. So, there's, I think, some creative ways of, you know, acknowledging commitments within denominations and then commitments to Christ beyond those designations,

**Carla Long 1:04:46**

For sure. And I'll just bring up a tiny little story that happened in Salt Lake not so long ago, one of our sweet little boys named Grant, he was eating some fruit snacks and communion was being served and after the server came for us, it was a woman named Denise, after she served us, there is Grant standing right behind her. And he was offering each person in the row one of his fruit snacks, oh, Of course, I took one because I wanted a fruit snack, and Grant went back to his mother and he said, I get

to serve just like Denise. And in one of those really beautiful moments, you know, that, that children may understand more than we think they do? Absolutely.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 1:05:31

I think that there's two really important things for Community of Christ to be doing at this particular moment in relation to the Lord's Supper, one is really working hard to improve our preaching at the Lord's Supper because the kinds of things we say are really important. That's one thing. But the other thing is to not build walls around the sacramental table, which runs contrary to the Spirit of Christ that's revealed in the sacraments, that's my take on it.

**Carla Long** 1:06:05

Oh, that's for sure. Well, thank you for that okay. So let me just give you an idea about where we're at. We've talked for more than an hour about this, but we are going to have two parts on the Sacraments. I'm going to ask my final question for you guys on this part. And then the next time we get together, we will jump into even more and listeners, if you have questions, then you should, you know, you should ask us because we love to talk about the sacraments, obviously, my goodness. So, my final question for this part one of our two-part series on the sacraments is we've talked about communion and children under the age of eight. So, if we will, we have an open communion for people who have made a commitment to Christ to take of our emblems, why won't other people's ordinations transfer to Community of Christ? Like if someone is a priest or an elder in another tradition? Why can't they automatically become a priest or an elder in our tradition when we accept other people's baptisms?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 1:07:11

Yeah. And I think that's a question that we hear in lots of different places. And as the church had become more ecumenical, that's been an issue, I think a really good place to start is to talk about the difference between the different sacraments. So, on the one hand, baptism, is a baptism into Christ, and any Christian baptism, and particularly if they're using the usual words being baptized into the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those are recognized among all Christians, as a baptism into Christ. And that's, that's a big picture sacrament. And so, the recognizing that baptism between denominations makes sense, you know, that's a fairly easy for some denominations easier than others. But thing to acknowledge and for us as a church, that's taken a while for us to get there, but with ordination, and a particularly with ministerial roles, this is more something that is customized, more unique to each denomination. Each denomination has a different sense of what the roles of a minister may be, what are the requirements for someone to be considered a minister? How does that Minister serve? What kinds of things are they authorized to do? And for denominations, ministers are authorized by the denomination or in the case of independent congregations, the they are authorized by the body by acceptance of that ministry by the body. And so, for instance, a priest in one denomination, the roles of a priest in one denomination might be completely different than the roles of a priest in another denomination and so to move that role, just without question from one to another, would be irresponsible. For the person being expected to now do these, do these other things, as well as for the congregation would not have someone who understands A) what the theology of ministry is that that person is coming from. Anyhow, so there needs to be a recognition, that denominations are the authorizers of ministers. And there's a whole bunch of elements that are quite different between different denominations. So, for some denominations, the sense of call to ministry of some form starts



with the individual themselves. And they pursue that through education through seeking this support or sponsorship of their congregation or the larger jurisdiction of their denomination, and, and ask them other officials within that denomination to discern with them, the sense of call, and in other kinds of churches, other denominations that that discernment of spirits call comes from the pastor or from other jurisdictional leaders and other levels. And that call may have like in Community of Christ that typically comes from the pastor or another jurisdictional leader that is discussed and a decision made before the person is even asked if they would consider that call. And then there's a time for discernment for that individual. And if they accept then then there are classes to take, etc. But in other denominations, there's maybe required a Master of Divinity, a three year advanced degree, or other required classes that might take two or three years. And then just in the hands on elements of ministry. In some denominations, that the role of a full time cleric a full time minister is to be doing pastoral work, to be counseling couples, or to be giving that kind of support and advice to people it might include prison ministry, it might include hospital ministry, and not that's but that's not going to be the kind of training or background that people in other denominations will have. And so, it's not it's like apples and oranges. What might be recognized as a deacon in one denomination is not the job description is not going to be the same, the process is not going to be the same, the way of authorizing or recognizing how the Spirit is calling that person is not going to be the same. And so, you know, that the denomination is the one that has the authority to choose its ministers. And so that that would be several other things to consider. But I think that's a way of looking at it, it's that the prerogative is of the denomination to choose who, who they will as ministers, who they will put through different processes. And so, it's, it's not transferable. Now, there are a few mainstream Christian traditions, who have similar enough understanding of what is ministry and what it's not, what is required as far as education and experience, and they will often recognize and accept each other's ministers, but even then, there's usually additional training, sometimes exams so that they're sure that the minister understands the polity of that particular denomination, etc. But there has to be already, you know, at least three things that they recognize the same what is the nature of ministry? What kind of Education has the person had? And what kind of experience as a pastor or minister have they had? Does that help?

**Carla Long** 1:14:36

Oh, for sure. That definitely helps. Tony, did you want to say something?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 1:14:43

Just one thing, and that is like an ecumenical conversation in which in which Community of Christ is a player. Three things baptism, eucharist, and ministry, which is the name of an actual a document from the World Council of Churches they are increasingly more difficult to come to agreements on. Baptism is the easiest one. That is those baptisms which are done in the name of the Trinity in which the Trinitarian faith is confessed those apply across the board. But Eucharist a little more difficult because of different understandings of what the emblems elements represent. Ministry is the hardest one. But it's, you know, it's a long process. And, and so just stay tuned for the long haul.

**Carla Long** 1:15:33

Yeah, I would be kind of terrified if I happen to ever change denominations like, I don't know, to Presbyterian or something like that. They're like, Hey, you're a bishop here, too. I'm like, I'm what I'm sorry. What do I do?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:15:47**

actually, bishops are really an interesting ministerial title that has Wow, really wide-ranging job descriptions. So, you know, in different parts of Africa that we've been to, you know, lots of people might call themselves a bishop. And sometimes that may have to do with a self-assigned title, or that they've gone somewhere in taking a class and then come back and show that they have additional authority by adding on the name of Bishop, of course, you know, in our denomination, bishops are our ministers, but they also have specific responsibilities for the financial wellbeing and of the church. So yeah, this is not a one size fits all kind of category, when we're talking about the different ministerial expectations and responsibilities from denominations to know, for sure,

**Carla Long 1:16:52**

I just don't know how, I mean, I would just be a huge responsibility to walk into a different church and say, oh, I have authority here. And this is my authority, you know, like, it just is so beyond what I would ever imagine.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:17:05**

And, and actually, that's, I'm glad you raised that word, again, authority. Because when it comes to ministry, authority has, there's several different sources of authority. But the one that makes someone a minister, and wherever they are, is the granted authority by the institution. And, you know, there's also personal authority, you know, the authority that we bring as individuals their spiritual authority, that the Spirit may give us in particular circumstances. But, when it comes to formal ordained offices, it is only the denomination that can grant that authority. And so, you know, that's then dependent on what the denominations understanding is of the theology of call, of the meaning of service, the meaning of servanthood, and priesthood and then it's specific descriptions of the different ministerial roles. So, authority is, is who grants authority is really the big piece here.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 1:18:18**

Yeah. And, you know, just thinking of the complexities of this. So, for example, as a theologian and historian of Christian thought, I love the thought of Martin Luther, I know my way pretty well through Luther's stuff. There's lots of stuff I just intrinsically agree with Luther on and yet I am an ordained Community of Christ High Priest, do you think I could actually go in and just chant the Eucharistic liturgy in a Lutheran worship service? I think that would be a sure way to empty that church out actually. You're never going to see that that happens. It's like things I can do in our church and even the fact that I love many things Lutheran, do not automatically mean I could function well as a Lutheran minister without a heck of a lot of training and background.

**Carla Long 1:19:12**

I you know what, I'm just going to be honest, I'm looking for one of those tall pointy hats in a ring. That's all I'm looking for.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:19:19**

Maybe, maybe you could implement some new practices within ordination in Community of Christ. Maybe. Yeah,

**Carla Long** 1:19:27

I think he just gave me something to work towards. Tony and Charmaine, thank you so much for this wonderful conversation. We are almost at an hour and a half and I'm sure if anybody is still listening, feel free if you want to continue discussing the sacraments to jump on over to part two. And we hope that you enjoyed our first podcast on the sacraments, and I just got to be honest with you listener. I don't think we have that much to talk about but apparently, we do. So, Tony and Charmaine thank you so much for part one of our two- part series on Percolating on Faith on the Sacraments. And we'll be hearing from you shortly.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 1:20:03

All right, and we thank you too. And we really do encourage you, the listeners, to send in your questions because we haven't formalized yet what all is going to be in the second one, and so, if you want your topic talked about, send them in.

**Josh Mangelson** 1:20:28

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