

**Josh Mangelson 00:17**

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

**Linda Booth 00:27**

Welcome to the 30th episode of Coffee Buzz, a podcast conversation with a member of Community of Christ First Presidency. My name is Linda Booth. Each month I host Coffee Buzz. I also provide episodes for Coffee Connect where I tell God with us stories that I've collected over the years serving as a Community of Christ apostle. I'm retired now, but once a minister, always a minister. And once an apostolic witness, always an apostolic witness. And I still have a passion for Christ's mission around the world. Today I'm talking with my good friend, Scott Murphy. Scott also has a passion for Christ's mission and Scott serves as a member of the First Presidency, a counselor to Prophet/President Steve Veazey and Director of Field Ministries. He supervises and supports members of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Welcome, my friend. How are you? And how's your family?

**Scott Murphy 01:36**

Hi, Linda, it's good to be back with you again today. I'm doing well. Yeah. Doing, uh, doing well keeping extremely busy. And, so, that, uh, I guess that would keep me out of trouble at some level. But, uh, yeah, and my family's doing well. All of them seem to be, uh, staying healthy and, you know, busy in their, their own careers and that. So, I'm, I'm really grateful for how well each of them and their, their families are doing, too.

**Linda Booth 02:05**

Yes, absolutely. And all of us have been watching the news and watching the horrific images of the war in Ukraine and, uh, all the disaster and the people in anguish and fleeing. And, so, I'm going to start off by asking how are our members and leaders doing in Ukraine and Russia, our staff and, and those, uh, families?

**Scott Murphy 02:31**

Well, I, I think as, as you know, Linda, and as our listeners could probably understand, I mean, these are situations that it's hard to even, even put into words the, the array of, of emotions and, and fears and concerns and that, uh, that are taking place in people's lives. I, I just recently, uh, this, earlier this week had a check in with, uh, Apostle Richard James who is the, um, the apostle that serves the Eurasia Field. Uh, Richard, you know, gave me an update that, um, he is keeping in contact with, in the best way he can, with some of our members. Uh, one of our retired past retired ministers and leader in, in Ukraine, um, he and his wife had been living in the, uh, the church apartment that we have there in Ukraine, in, in Kyiv, but that apartment is, is up on the fourth floor and, and did not have any basement. And, so, it was really, for both he and his wife, a, a very vulnerable place, um, with the bombing taking, um, taking place and that. So, Richard had shared with me that, that Ephim and his, his wife have, uh, been able to relocate to another building where there is a basement. So, when, when the bombings are taking place, they can at least have better protection, you know, in the lower level of a, of the building.

So, we're, we're grateful for, for that, that they were able to find another place to go for, for further, um, support. But, again, you can only begin to imagine the, the level of stress and anxiety, um, that they live with every minute of the day wondering what's going on. Uh, the other, the reports that Richard has provided is, is that, um, many of our other members have been fortunate enough to be able to get out of the country at this point. One, one mother and her children, um, were able to get out and are now in Poland and, um, are considering what their next steps are, are going to be. Some who have had connections with, um, church members, uh, from World Conference and that, um, have, have made connections in, in Europe that way. We have some members who were in the Odis, uh, um, Odessa area, um, have made their way to northern Italy to be with friends and connections that, that they had in northern Italy, and learned that our, our members in Germany, a number of them have started to open their homes to receive people in their homes, uh, refugees coming in. So, they're, they're just offering a, a tremendous ministry to, to people's lives of both church members and, or not, as just a safe place for, for people and families to be. So, it, um, so there's, you know, again, there's, there's the blessings that, that people have been able to get out. Um, so, it's a blessing that they're away from the, the, the risk and, and all of that. Um, and yet, at the same time, their hearts just ache for their homeland. And, you know, the images that they constantly see on the news of the, just the decimation taking place of, of the land and property. Um, our, Richard also indicated that our, our members in, in Russia, um, have deeply exp, have expressed their deep concern about what is taking place, too, and their sadness about, you know, their, their friends and people that they've shared time with in and, uh, from ( . . . ), um, Ukraine.

**Scott Murphy 06:33**

Um, and, uh, some of them have even, um, up in the Siberia area, have even, uh, participated in protests. And, so, they've, uh, they tried to put their faith and trust on the line and, and stand up and say, This is not okay. Fortunately, we have other members who live in closer areas of proximity to, to military bases in Ukraine and, and that just raises, uh, further concerns about their risk of being too vocal or, uh, saying too much. And, so, just, you know, understanding all of those dynamics that, um, individuals in Russia are, are having to deal with, too, and the consequences, uh, for them, their choices when they begin to speak out. So, still a really difficult area and, uh, difficult time. Uh, but, uh, you know, we give thanks for the glimpses of, of hope that occur in the safeties that, that, uh, some people are in. And, yet, we recognize that some of our church member families are, are now separated because the males have, uh, been retained in, in, uh, Ukraine to, to continue to fight. So.

**Linda Booth 07:48**

Yes, in times like this, we understand the need for prayer and for love and compassion. And it's good to hear the stories of those who are passionately supporting, um, not just our members, but all those who are ( . . . )

**Scott Murphy 08:05**

All those. Yeah. (Yeah.) And, and I, you know, I would, you know, probably add, too, here that, that the Presiding Bishopric is, is exploring, um, the possibility of a special offering, um, to be raised to, uh, continue to support, you know, the people of Ukraine and, and that in that area. So, um, as we anticipate, you know, other oblation, you know, needs and the poverty and, uh, even to the point when, um, when individual's in church members might be able to return home, um, there's going to be a lot of

rebuilding taking place. And, so, yeah, the PB and the Presidency wer, was having conversation yesterday. And so some further considerations will be, uh, looked at and, uh, I encourage the listeners to, you know, be, you know, watching for announcements that come out on social media and, and other ways on the church's website.

**Linda Booth 09:01**

Thank you, thank you, Scott, for that update. And we do join together in prayer for all of our sisters and brothers in Ukraine and in Russia. Scott, you and I recently attended a celebration of life for our dear friend and colleague, Cindy Thomas, uh, who supported the Council of Twelve and the Presidents of Seventy and at times, even the First Presidency and Presiding Bishopric office as an administrative assistant. She served with us for six years. One of the elements of the celebration that she planned was to have Apostle Bunda Chibwe lead the congregation in a lively closing hymn and he couldn't attend because he was in the Republic of Congo. So, he sent a video of the congregation singing and dancing which was a wonderful way to end Cindy's celebration of life. Are, are more and more apostles and world church ministers traveling worldwide? Is the corona virus pandemic still impacting travel?

**Scott Murphy 10:02**

Well, Linda, as you know, from your years of experience of, um, you know, serving with the Council of Twelve Apostles and even in your role as President of the Council of Twelve, um, it's, it's hard to hold back some of those Apostles who feel that call to get out into their fields and bear witness and, you know, work with the people and all of that. And some of our Apostles who serve in the multi-nations parts of the world outside the U.S., um, their some of the worst. And, so, as you, as you've indicated, yeah, Apostle Bunda Chibwe, um, after, after a couple years, he was just chomping at the bit to, to get out there. So, yeah, um, I have recently supported some Apostles to, to do some traveling in, in their field where, where COVID levels have been on the decline. Um, and so, you know, Bunda has been traveling and is, is currently traveling in, yeah, in his fields in nations in Africa. Uh, Catherine has been, been doing some traveling, you know, trying to support the mission there. Um, Carlos, um, in, in, uh, Central America has, has traveled within Honduras. Um, I don't believe that Carlos has really traveled outside yet the nations and some of those nations in Central America haven't completely opened in that, in that regard. So, um, yeah, so that's happening and so we're just trying to take it, you know, um, a, a step at a time and trying to be mindful of, of that. There, even when working with, with Bunda, um, I've had to say, these are some places where I'm supportive of you going, but these other places where COVID levels are still so high, as we monitor, you know, the CDC and, and the World Health Organization, uh, monitoring status in those kind of places. Um, and so that, uh, that is happening. Um, have, you know, conversations with other Apostles where we've determined that after looking at, at the data, yeah, that it's probably not wise yet to travel to some of those locations, which is, again, it's a difficult thing to, to say that because there is that desire to be with the people. And yet at the same time, we, we have to understand that it, uh, it's not only the Apostle who, who puts himself at risk, but, you know, if they're traveling like that and the potential of, of bringing, uh, a, uh, a form of, of, of COVID or something into a location where people are meeting, um, we just don't want to put people at risk in, in that way when there's still opportunity to connect with people online and other ways. And, and again, I try to be very mindful that, you know, for, for any of us called into, to full time ministry, you know, we're called to, to go and bear witness and, and all of that. But it's important that we have to be respectful of their families, too. I, I do not want to put, you know, rural church leaders' families at risk, um, in that

regard. So, it's this balance of, of trying to care for, you know, both the family, the personal needs, and, and the needs of the, the community in, in that regard. So, we are, we are slowly learning how to move safely back, um, to the levels of travel and, uh, activity in responsible ways. So, we're, uh, yeah, we keep working at that. And, uh, you know, it's, uh, we are now, uh, anticipating that the World Church Leadership Council will return to its first in-person meetings in May. Um, so, we're, we've told them to plan for that. That's what we're planning, too. Uh, but, yet, we're, we're monitoring and watching some of the latest, you know, news coming up with the, uh, new variant of, uh, um, of, of the, the COVID that, um, if it continues to rise in unhealthy ways, then we may have to pull back from that. So, we'll, uh, we'll see where that continues to go. But, uh, we're, again, we're trying to, trying to be wise stewards of all of that and, and we'll just, uh, monitor it each time.

**Linda Booth** 14:13

Yes, of course. The pandemic may have slowed some opportunities to advance Christ's mission, but it certainly didn't stop the Spirit from reaching out to people in need and Community of Christ members, priesthood and leaders bringing ministry to advance Christ's mission. Uh, please share some examples of how Christ's mission continued even in the midst of the pandemic.

**Scott Murphy** 14:38

Well, as, as you and I have talked in the past about this, Linda, the, the pandemic has been an exhausting challenge. And, but in the midst of that, there still ha, have been some amazing things that have emerged that I, I believe have resulted out of what we've encountered during the, the extended pandemic. And in some ways, a, again, as we have talked, as the Presidency talks and the World Church Leadership Council, um, you know, there's things that have been accelerated because of this, that have forced us into new ways of, um, being together, new ways of looking at being the church and how to live that out. So, here are some of the things that really continue to stand out for me as, as the church's response and how we continue to, to live Christ's mission. Mission centers in the U.S. and, and Western nations, for me, have become extremely creative in, in how people have shared together, uh, online. So, the way that they, they've come together in, you know, worships on Sunday or midweek small group gatherings have been incredible. You know, things like book clubs have been started to form small group ministries focused on topics like racial justice and environmental concerns and spiritual formation. You know, the book clubs for children that have been, uh, developed and, um, you know, getting children online together to share, you know, with, with adults who offer that support to develop their, their discipleship formation. Um, you know, this is incredible. Uh, the Presidency was just meeting, um, yesterday with, with Dave Anderson, who serves as the High Priest Quorum President, you know, and Dave, talking about, you know, these, these gatherings that the High Priests have, have had online to explore topics like metamorphosis coming out of, you know, President Veazey's, you know, work in and, uh, vision. You know, Dave was sharing with us that the High Priest Quorum have, have now developed book clubs that have just enriched the opportunity of conversations and, and these book clubs are with people from across the U.S. and, and some of the, you know, Canada and some of the other nations. Um, and he, there is now a book club occurring with, with High Priests over in, in Europe. Um, and, and again, Dave is able to participate that, you know, and it's just those moments when you realize, you know, nothing like that was really taking place before the pandemic. I mean, Mission Centers might have had some book clubs or people doing some things like that, but it was also, it was always with people in your, your own congregation or Mission Center. Now we have

people coming together from across the nation, uh, or multiple nations. And I, I just think that that's such an incredible expression and reminder of, of who Community of Christ is as a global community. We are always more than just our local congregation or our Mission Center. And, so, those are, those are really some, some fun things. I, I, I may have mentioned this in the past because I think this one's really unique, but there's one Mission Center, un, that's been doing online group, um, ministry with youth and adults that have been formed around the video game Minecraft. So, I'm a, I'm aware of the video game, I've, I've never really played it, but it's a game about building things and so a, adults and, and youth are, are working together in, and again, people from across the U.S., um, you know, joining together, building things together. And it, it wasn't this last Christmas, it was the, the Christmas of 2020 that they, they had a, a contest of, of building Christmas tree scenes together. And, um, I was invited to be one of the, the judges, the guest judges to come in and, and, uh, see all of the different creations of, of these groups that were made out of these, these, uh, these teams and, and, again, it's just a different way of bringing people together in meaningful relationships, so. I, uh, we have our first online congregation that was established from, you know, people from, you know, Western Europe, New Zealand and, and other locations that are now formed as a, a new online congregation. There's, Mission Centers have joined together for shared activities and ministries that really have increased their, um, participation and even the question to say, Should those two Mission Centers merge into one Mission Center? Um, many stories of people who have drifted away from, you know, uh, the local congregations over the years have reconnected online. Um, I, I, I also love the fact, and, and I know that you've encountered this to your own experience online, but it happens frequently for me where I'm invited to share in ministry with a, with a congregation, you know, someplace across the US or Canada or other places, and I get online, and there's people from a different nation or, you know, completely different Mission Center. And, and I'm thinking, I, you know, what you're doing here. And it's just (Yes.) because they've had relationships with those people that they feel comfortable to be able to get online and be a part of that community. Again, another, just as, other wonderful expression of the power of relationships. And the, the pandemic, in some ways, has broken down the geographical walls and barriers, um, of proximity and online, been able to create these connections. Um, and I just love what that has done. And I, uh, I'm just so, I'm just grateful for people who have made that possible for congregations and Mission Centers and, you know, the, the, the good work that, you know, Beyond the Walls and, you know, other, uh, other areas have done that have really created this, these wonderful connections, you know, for people in the church.

**Linda Booth 21:27**

Yes, absolutely. And when you mentioned Beyond the Walls, that's out of Toronto, and that congregation's enormous. And they've created resources for the whole church of music, hymns being sung, uh, a beautiful repertoire of all these hymns, uh, that their choir has sung that other congregations can use. So, resources have been developed and it, it just, it does absolutely go on and on. And, and I've been at several worship services online where a child was participating and their grandparents who lived across the country also were able to participate in that worship service and be a ch, a part of their grandchild's, uh, ministry which they wouldn't have been able to do before. (Exactly.) Oh, it, it is truly astounding. So, you and I've been preaching, um, quite a bit on Zoom the last few years. And I've noticed the last six months or so that even when I preach on Zoom, many of the congregations have become hybrid congregations, meaning, uh, you can see, I can see on the screen some people are present in the sanctuary while others are joining the worship online like me. And, and,



quite honestly, next Sunday is the very first Sunday I'm preaching inside a sanctuary which will be a very unusual experience. What do you believe congregations and World Church ministers have learned about ministry and worship and mission because of the pandemic? You've touched on it a little, but are there some specific learnings that the World Church Leadership Council or Council of Twelve or First Presidency have noted.

**Scott Murphy** 23:09

Yeah, so, I, I think I, I want to really name two very specific ones. Recently, I was having lunch and in a good conversation with, with an evangelist that, you know, Bill Barnhart. Um, our listeners Bill, um, Bill is a retired, um, full time minister with the church and a member of the World Church Leadership Council, was, was the director of human resources for the church for a number of years. And, um, you know, Bill and, and I, you know, had actually met here at the Temple and, and, um, you know, brought lunch together and was just engaging, catching up on life and engaging in some conversations. But it was in the midst of that talking and, and sharing that, that Bill was sharing with me one of the learnings for, for him that has come during this pandemic. And that has been the importance and the need to focus on relationships. And I absolutely agree with Bill. (Yes.) So, one of the areas that we, we need to continue to give attention to as congregations and as groups begin to move back to, you know, impersonal or hybrid models, as you've just talked about, Linda, is this. People are yearning for meaningful connections and relationships that enrich their lives. It's been a lonely time in some ways, um, and people are truly looking to be back in, in, in connecting with one another. And that doesn't always mean just in person, but connecting in meaningful ways. And when you think about it, the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ who was constantly in meaningful relationships that, with people, that allowed them to explore their own lives and to feel loved and safe to work towards the changes needed for wholeness. So, one of the critical learnings is, is this coming as a probing question in our current models of what in-person church is, is giving attention to. And, to be honest, when you actually think about it, the current models of our Sunday morning worships, don't provide a lot of meaningful connection opportunities. Um, when, when you think about this, this block of time that's filled with an order of worship that is usually being delivered to you, um, there's, there's really minimal time for people to truly engage in, in connection, um, in each other's lives. And, so, I'm finding myself really wrestling with this question of, How do we begin to broaden our understanding and models of worship and being together that can be more engaging and connecting? Um, how do we understand worship not as something that we do, but worship as an experience that is present within us and with us? Um, and what if people have a, a limited time of being together during a week? And how do we best utilize that time of creating opportunities for people to, to be together, to share together, to explore together the journey of discipleship, the, the messiness of life, to understand how do we continue to live our hopes and, and be faithful in, in the midst of that messiness and the pains that we see around the world? Um, so, those are the kind of questions that I'm, I'm raising coming out of this. And, and, so, as, as a church, how do we give ourselves permission to continue to explore different ways of being together? If it's online or if it's in person or if it's a, a hybrid? So, that's an important learning for me and, and as I've engaged with the Presidency, as I've engaged with, you know, members of the Council of Twelve, those are, those are relevant questions that, that I believe that we need to be searching and exploring and talking about and a, and giving ourselves permission to experiment with different ways to bring people together that, that may offer a different way of being together in worship in those sacramental, um, experiences.

**Scott Murphy 28:12**

Another important learning, um, that I, that I know you get, too, it, that, that is really elevated during the pandemic, is the reality that the church building is not the church. (Yes.) You know, so, so, some amazing things have occurred among congregations who, who have gathered in the spirit of, of joy and love. Um, and thinking truly about the community, um, in coming to that realization that having a church building isn't a requirement for being a, a loving community. Um, and, in fact, I, I, I think what pleases me is that there are, there are some congregations in some different parts in different Mission Centers in the context of the U.S. right now at least, that have engaged in some serious conversations with each other a, about bringing their congregations together, um, into one location and forming a new congregation. And, and this is more than just saying, Yeah, let's merge our congregations together. It's the research is pretty clear that, you know, just merging congregations, you know, i, isn't successful. But when something can be birthed to be open to birthing a new congregation, then there is a better chance of, of something, um, that can, can really be inspiring and grow. But, but at least at a minimum, what's happening is that congregations are, they're stepping back and saying, you know, when, when they're in close proximity to each other, you know, within a 20, even 30 minute, uh, proximity, they're saying, Why are we trying to maintain, you know, three different buildings when, when we could come together in, into one and free ourself up from the burden of, of, of time and money and, and energy trying to just deal with the building issues. So, that, that is a, an important learning. And, again, I know that you have seen this, you know, too, Linda, but I, I, I mean, there's, there's things happening across all denominational, um, entities arou, around this, that, that are seeing people are coming to the realization that if, if mission is really going to happen, then they need to free theirself up from, from the time, the money, and energies of just maintaining the building and really direct their, their resources of person and, and finances towards truly living mission. And, and so that's, that's happening across the board. And so I think that, that's been a tremendous learning, too, coming out of the pandemic that we have to give attention to. Um, and don't know where that will go. But I, that will happen. So, tho, those are just, you know, with our limited time, those are just really two important learnings that, for me, continue to, to stand out. And I expect that, that over time as, as we, as we kind of now step forward into new ways of being that hindsight will continue to offer us further insights, um, and learnings that will emerge in and will help us raise questions that we need to, to wrestle with and explore about what it means for the church, um, living that mission in a new way as, as communities of members and friends. So, we'll, uh, yeah, it's a constant process of just trying to be open to, to some of those aspects.

**Linda Booth 32:04**

Exactly. And there have been new opportunities for relationships that have emerged during the pandemic. I'm not sure that I would have been invited to lead a woman support group with two women ministers in the Philippines and two in South Korea and one in Nepal without everyone's experience and comfort level with Zoom. And that monthly meeting has really been a blessing to us as we've prayed together and encouraged one another. And, and that's led to an invitation for me to speak at the Philippines priesthood gathering about joy in ministry. President Veazey and I are both taping messages to be viewed by those priesthood members. But before the pandemic, President Veazey probably would have been traveling to Manila. Do you anticipate that World Church leaders will be traveling less because of Zoom and other technologies? Or, or do you believe that the benefit of being with people will cause extensive travel by leaders and ministries to resume?

**Scott Murphy 33:11**

Yeah, it's good question, Linda. You know, I, I the, probably the simplest answer is I think it's going to be a balance of both. Um, you know, being with per, being with people in person is, is important. But I also think we have to be careful not to somehow imply that, that in-person connections is, is, is always better than being together over Zoom. And, and that's a delicate piece that we have to be mindful of because it can, we, we do have the tendency of time to say, yeah, it's better to be in person or we treat in-person as, as a higher quality than in the, you know, being together on Zoom is a lower quality. And, and I understand that for some people that may be the case, but that's not the case for everyone. So, connecting over Zoom, um, or online, um, allows for just different ways of being together. And, so, I, you know, I'm thinking just as I listened to your question, taking your example that you just mentioned, uh, uh, if, about being with, you know, the, the, uh, the people in the women in Philippines and, you know, South Korea and all of that. If, if you would have had to travel to be with those women, you could have done that, but you would have been just with them for a short time and then gone. And chances are you may never, never have traveled back there again. But through online connections, your support can be extended over a longer period of time. And you have the opportunity to not only be with the women in the Philippines, but you could bring all of those women together and, and share together and create that support group together as expanded community. So, um, there are, I think it's important for the, for the listeners to understand that there are places in the world that are communal in nature. Um, so, a, a, again, we look at, you know, many of the African nations, you know, the, the, the, the members and, and that in India and other locations, those are just strong communal, um, cultures and being together in person is very important. Um, but there's other places in the world that are less communal and connecting one on one in, in a either in person or online, is a more preferred way of, of being together. And, so, part of this is it's just trying to be sensitive to the cultural dynamics and how do we work through that and provide, in the best way we can, those, those connections and relationships in what fits within the cultural dynamics. The World Church leaders, you know, we talk about travel and that, the World Church leaders are also trying to be really responsible financially with church's resources. And, as we've had more conversation, we're trying to be responsible to care for the Earth. So, we recognize that when we are traveling, especially by air, um, we contribute to the growing carbon emissions footprint in our environment. So, each time we, we choose not to travel by air, we're saving money for the World Church budget, uh, that can be used, you know, in other ways, um, but we're also choosing not to contribute to the carbon footprint that, that we understand is, is impacting environments around the world.

**Scott Murphy 37:09**

As the World Church Leadership Council has discussed and decisions that we've made, um, for our listeners, the World Church Leadership Council meets, um, at least three times a year. Um, we meet for at least a week, uh, in January, a week in May, and, and then in September. And then the Council of Twelve a, and Presidents of Seventy usually meet the second week during those times. So, it's really a block of, of two weeks when, when, uh, church leaders and quorums, you know, meet. So, we have made the decision to move to a, a different model, um, where, uh, we are looking at in our annual meetings, two of those meetings will be in person, and one of those meetings will, will be online. And we're doing that intentionally. First of all, to meet in person gives us more time to be together. Because



when we are meeting online, um, for listeners to understand, Apostle Mareva Arnaud lives in French Polynesia and Apostle Catherine, uh, Mambwe, uh, lives the furthest east in, in Zambia. The time spread between those two extremes is, is a 12 hour time difference. So, when it's 7 a.m. in the morning for, uh, Mareva, it's 7 p.m. at night for, for Catherine. Um, so, we've had to, we're limited when we're meeting online, we're limited to, um, about a three hour block of time here in Independence in, in the central, um, U.S.A. time. Um, so, we meet from 12 noon till 3 in the afternoon, which, again, starts at 7 a.m. for Catherine, uh, or Mareva, but starts at 7 p.m. for Catherine. So, you know, poor Catherine, by the time we're done it, uh, you know, it's going on, you know, 10, 10 o'clock, you know, or later for her. And, and she's getting pretty tired and, and when Bunda is traveling over there, too, both of them, you could see their heads sometimes drooping there. So, we're trying to, you know, be sensitive to that so, um, so to meet twice a year in person gives us more time to go in depth in that way. But we've also made a choice that meeting online once a, once a year and those three times is, is a, a response to being, uh, responsible to our, our budget and trying to save money and it's also a way for us to say we will not travel and, and re, you know, help to do best we can to con, not to contribute to, you know, further carbon, uh, you know, emissions that way in, in the extensive travel. When you, when you multiply all of the people who have to travel from outside the U.S. to come in and even within the U.S. So, that, uh, that's our commitment at this point in how we're trying to respond to, uh, those dynamics.

**Linda Booth 40:24**

Well, that, that's, that's really important. It is, uh, Scott. Um, you've mentioned, uh, World Church Finance Board and, and I thought of that in relationship to one of my favorite agenda items during a Council of Twelve meetings was when we would share, uh, mission stories with one another and we would (Yeah.) hear our colleagues talk about the good things happening in their mission fields. And it was inspiring and confirming that we were all living Christ's mission. And, and the same was true at that World Church Finance Board meeting, the ones that are, uh, delegates, so to speak, are representatives of the church from all over the world who gathered to talk about the budget, and those board members were really attentive to the budget reports and even during the discussions, but you could see the joy on their faces when Apostles shared the good news from the fields of the church. So, Scott, please share some of those mission stories you've been hearing from Apostles and others who serve and lead, uh, first in developing nations.

**Scott Murphy 41:26**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I agree with you, Linda. Those, those mission moments, uh, with the Finance Board are always the, uh, the real highlights. So, let me, yeah, let me share some of these and, and again, I'm trying to be respectful of time and, and that, but let me let me share some, uh, uh, things that I, I'm just really pleased with. So, I'm going to start with Catherine and, and Bunda who, who serve the two African fields. So, they have developed a, a five year mission plan. Um, and that was, uh, that was developed in, in collaboration with, uh, Apostle Ron Harmon, who's President of the Council of Twelve, and, and myself as Director of Field Ministries. And one of the emphasis for Catherine and Bunda in their African fields is, is to really give attention to, to further developing disciples to live mission. And in addition to that, there has been a major emphasis about the empowerment of women to serve, to serve as priesthood and to be leaders in many of the congregations throughout Africa. So, it, it recently, you know, back, back at the end of the, uh, 2021, was, was meeting with Catherine and, and, and Bunda and just kind of looking at, you know, what had really occurred during the past year and what they were

able to achieve even in the midst of the pandemic. So, here's some things that really stand out. Catherine organized and, and held a women's gathering in Malawi. And over 200 women were able to come and participate in that event. And, and when they took pictures, I just absolutely loved seeing the image and the scene on their faces, their laughter, their smiles, and joy. And it was just a blessing. But it was about them. It, it, they could be them as women and, and be empowered. Bunda and Catherine have also been spending time in disciple and leadership development. And there has been a number of women who have been called to serve as a priesthood in the life of the church that are truly making a difference. And, and, Linda, you know this better than any of us, that when mission is focused on the empowerment of people's lives, positive things begin to happen. (Yes.) So, get this. In one Mission Center this last year, they had over 107, baptisms, and another Mission Center, 172 baptisms that were recorded. And another small Mission Center, 76 baptisms, another 50 baptisms, in another 86, another 94. Out of their vision in mission, eight Young Peacemaker Clubs have been established in, in Malawi, which is one of the poorest nations in, in, the, you know, the continent of Africa. Think about that: eight Peacemaker Clubs that are being run now by, uh, by volunteers, by women leaders that are empowering, impacting children and youth in special ways about peace in their life. Four clubs have been established so far in Zambia and Catherine expects there to be more. They have hired a, a youth minister in Zambia who is connecting online with youth in, um, in Zambia, in, in Malawi, in Kenya, um, and bringing youth together in those special ways which is, is really powerful. So, there's ju, just some incredible things taking place and, and that is what Bunda's over there doing now in his, in his field, um, is just doing training. He just left the Congo DR, um, after doing a couple of weeks of training with leaders and in really developing the, the identity and mission of, of, of Community of Christ and empowering them to continue to grow and, and the church, the church is growing and expanding in those two fields. A couple of weeks ago, the church in India experienced the ordination of the first woman called to the priesthood office of Seventy. (Ah. Wonderful.) Linda, this is, and for our listeners, this, from our cultural contexts, this, this may not sound like much, but for this culture and, and for this community that, you know, these tribal cultures in India, and we've been, we've been present in, in India for over 50 years now. This is a significant sign of the changes being made as the value of women are upheld in the identity, mission and message of Community of Christ. And soon, two more women in another part of India, in another Mission Center, will be ordained to the priesthood office of Seventy.

**Scott Murphy 46:36**

I wish I could show the viewers the image that, the pictures that were sent to me of the gathering, but there are, and, and you've seen these images before, Linda, there's hundreds and hundreds of church members who came from the different villages gathered under their, under their tents that they create in their just glorious colors in, in their dress. And, and you look out on this multitude of people gathered for this special occasion of, of the first, uh, woman, um, ordained to the Office of Seventy. That, (Sounds marvelous.) that is mission at the heart of changing people's lives. (Yes,) I, you know, other mission projects are, are focused on, and I'm really excited about some of this in the work that the Council of Twelve has done with the, um, with their leadership with a, with abolish poverty and end suffering and their work with the, the funds in the budget dedicated to, uh, world hunger. You know, a, a congregation in Mikato, which is a part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, has taken funds that we've been able to grant to them and they have developed a vocational training center for young women in the practice, practical training of cutting and sewing techniques. This training center as, as a part of the Mission Center provides women a trade and a skill that will empower them to now go and start their own

businesses or gain employment. And, and this, this place where this is, this Mokando, I hope I'm saying that right, is, is one of the poorest areas of, of the city, um, in, in the Congo there where they're at. And because of this level of poverty, the education and training of children, and particularly girls and women, is, is so minimal. And so what this church now in congregation is doing with the grants that we've been able to provide, is, is creating this opportunity for women to be empowered to do something and, and take control in, in their own lives. So, that's just, a, a, another example is, um, some grants were made in another, I'm trying to think where this was at, but, um, it was in Bunda's field, but they've created a, um, a business of, of making bricks. (Ah.) And, so, the job is creating not only bricks, but they're, they're creating opportunities for families to, to generate income to feed themselves. You know, I, I could go on, I could talk about the, the sugarcane fields, uh, or the sug, the plantations that we provided for generating ongoing income for families. Um, the, the, the water, the borehole water systems that we've been able to put in, not only for church members, but it's for the whole community. And so here Community of Christ is, it's the message to say, We care about you and we want you to be healthy. And, so, those are just some powerful expressions of what are taking place in, in some of the nations. I was recently in conversation with Apostle, uh, Mareva Arnaud who I have, uh, she is now serving, uh, as the Mission Center President for French Polynesia, again, coming out of their, they really were hit hard during the pandemic. And I told Mareva, I said, I want you to go back in there, I want you to be the leader of mission. She is so busy right now because the church live with just the congregations are coming alive. They're, they're reaching out, they're doing things. They're, um, they're working out into the community. And I know, you know, that culture. And it's just, it's been a blessing to hear the stories and the excitement that's been taking place and all of the volunteer leaders that are making things happen. So, there's really some, some really exciting things happening as, a, as life is starting to, you know, be, take on and people are coming and participating more. And, uh, I'm just really grateful for what the church and the message of the church out and these nations are doing.

**Linda Booth 50:54**

Well, I've been smiling and tears of joy in my eyes as you shared these stories and I'm sure our Coffee Buzz listeners also probably, I wish we could see their faces, Scott, just like the, uh, World Church Finance Board members whose faces just lit up, as you tell the stories of Christ's mission being lived out. Any mission stories from those countries, those Western nations. But (Yeah, here's) ( . . . ) different.

**Scott Murphy 51:20**

Yeah, yeah, here's a few. So, um, on, on Monday, I was in, I was meeting with, uh, leaders, uh, from the Australia, uh, leadership team. And they, at the, at the beginning, as we were just getting started, they were, um, they were sharing with me a, a, about the family camp that they had just come from, um, over the weekend, ( . . . ) as an extended weekend, kind of their first camp that they've been able to, to have back in person. But they said what was amazing was the number of people who chose to come to be a part, participate in that. And even more amazing, the number of people who had probably been, not participated in the life of the church for 20 years (Wow.) had come. And, um, they just, they said there was something so special at that, that camp. And, again, as I spoke earlier, the time to be together in meaningful relationships, that just brought a spiritual depth and nurturance to all of the people who participated and when that family camp experience ended, people's lives were just touched. And, and I could just see it on the faces of, of Ben and Adam as, as, as I was, you know,

sharing with them and they were sharing with me just how deeply blessed that they were feeling to have been able to participate and experience that. So, that's, that was just a wonderful story for me. You know, I, I think in my work with, with Richard and in some of the listeners may have, you know, heard this before, but I think is still just a powerful, uh, example that, that there's been a real focus in, um, recognizing that in, um, in the western Mission Center in, in specifically in France, the nation of France, that there's been a number of members from French Polynesia who have relocated there for work in education and other things. But, but didn't have the connection with the church there. And real intentional efforts by one individual, a, a Seventy who, who is from French Polynesia, who has made a, a, a two year or, or more commitment to, to come and volunteer is, is now spending time in, in France and reconnecting with those people. And and they have started to meet together. And even more exciting is, is now because of the online opportunities, when they come together for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper they're joining with, with congregations in French Polynesia, um, to share those times together. So, they're, they're not only connecting as a, as a community of members and friends there in French, but they're also connecting with friends and family back in French Polynesia. So, some wonderful things are emerging in, in Europe in that way. Um, again, I just want to highlight this because I am so pleased and, and just so grateful for the missional response occurring from, from our members in, in Germany who, who have opened their homes. So, they have reached out. They've notified Richard. Um, they're working through the systems to say if, if there are church members or even other refugees who need a place to stay, they're opening their home, offering a bed, food, protection. And, so, this is, this is just a, a absolutely perfect example of mission of Christ through the compassionate action and ministries into the, the welfare of, of, of those who are broken and hurting and, and, so, I, I just want to continue to uphold that. Recently, one of our leaders, Ryan Pitt, who was a Mission Center president in the Mid-Atlantic Mission Center, took time to travel, I believe it was in, in, in New York, um, to where the, the, at the early part of the, the war in Ukraine was, uh, happening, the Parliament of world religions made the decision to hold a special prayer service, um, at the beginning of the war. And, Ryan, a, again, one of our leaders, one of our, uh, members, took the time to travel over there to where the, the actual gathering of ministers and leaders from different inter, you know, faiths around the world were gathering for prayer together. And I love this picture that Ryan had sent, that he was standing with, with ministers from the array of faith traditions that had participated. And it was this powerful moment, realizing to see that Community of Christ, the church was present for that special service through Ryan's presence, but through the participation of, of many, um, Apostle Barb Carter and many others who had participated online in that service. But Ryan was the physical presence of Community of Christ to say, We are with you. We are a part of the global community of faith (Yes. Yes.) who are coming together, and, and that, it was a moment for the witness of who Community of Christ is in our enduring principles of, of the worth of all persons in the blessings of community. And that was a proud moment for me, um, in, in what Ryan did in, in saying it's important enough for Community of Christ to be in this place. So, yeah, there's a, there's a variety of other things taking place. Um, groups, Mission Centers, the Greater Pacific Northwest, the British Isles Mission Center sharing together in, in climate change webinars that they're, they're spending time really trying to empower people to respond to the environmental justice needs that are occurring on our world. Um, the, the, another Mission Center has organized a, what they're calling as a new expression of, of community, um, entitled Footprints. In this new expression of the church is, is engaged in, in what they are, are calling Community Prayer Walks. Community Prayer Walks are people coming together, intentionally going to a location, and walking together, praying together, for the issues of justice and needs in that community. You know, and so

what a beautiful way to actively live their concerns for the welfare of others and to model that, that hope and faith that they have, um, to live that action of, of justice as they physically go out and walk and are present to, in the midst of the people. Um, you know, another one that I would encourage the, the listeners online to, to search out and that's the, the new expression that, of Community of Christ, that has been launched here at the Temple entitled The Center for Living Water. And that's occurring here at the Community of Christ Temple in Independence, Missouri. And so this mission, uh, here in the U.S.A. is focused on providing spiritual transformation and peaceful living opportunities for people to engage in practice and action. So, as, as things begin to open up more, there's been several things online that, that the Center for Living Water has been doing and even now in in during Lent, they're providing a Lenten, um, um, um gathering or resource for each week. But the participants, the vision is, is for participants to come together for personal spiritual practices, discernment, and, and community gatherings a, as a, as a collective movement towards peace and justice in, in the community, but to allow that to flow out from the Temple into the life of the church and communities and, and again, the, the image of, of living water is, is that image of water moving and the presence of, of this, what's happening. And, so, you know, out of the team that's leading this new expression, there's, there's, this is one expression of the Temple being alive and fulfilling its purpose to, uh, at, at the pursuit of peace, reconciliation and healing of the Spirit. So, I, I, I could go on with, with a number of other ones, but I hope that that just gives a sense of some of the, the things that are happening out of the creative nature and sense of venture, um, for people who have responded to this, this urging to live mission in different ways and, and to, to be out there and I'm, I'm just really excited to, to see those expressions happening.

**Linda Booth** 1:00:17

Oh, thank you, my dear friend. This has been an exciting, inspiring conversation filled with good news and filled with challenges for each one of us to be the living water, to be the living expression of Jesus Christ in our own neighborhoods, in our families, and with our friends, and even with the stranger. So, thank you. Thank you, my dear brother and( . . . ) friend. And thank you Coffee Buzz listeners for joining our conversation. I hope that it has inspired you and challenged you to be that living water, that living expression. And Coffee Buzz listeners, please watch for next month's episode of Coffee Buzz. I'll be having a conversation with Prophet/President Steve Veazey. Until then, blessings to you.

**Josh Mangelson** 1:01:15

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