

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.

Robin Linkhart 00:34

Hello, and welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is your host, Robin Linkhart. And today we are here with Karin Peter, the one and only Karin Peter, who is a familiar voice here on Project Zion. Karin's here today to tell us about some of the new dimensions of her ministry, and to share some information about current preparations for World Conference 2023. Karin, welcome.

Karin Peter 01:03

Thanks, Robin. It's good to be here, although, as I've said before, when I'm the interviewee rather than the interviewer it always makes me a little nervous, but I'm glad to be here either way, in either capacity.

Robin Linkhart 01:16

I connect with what you said 100%. So, Karen, uh, you have a new role in your ministry with the church. Tell us a little bit about that and what it looks like.

Karin Peter 01:29

So, um, I'm kind of excited about it because for, as I understand it, for the first time, um, in kind of our current, um, memory, let's say, I haven't looked historically, but in current memory, um, we have a Seventy, and that would be me, who is responsible for the worship planning. And that is, uh, as I understand it, new in Community of Christ. So, we'll see what that looks like as we go forward from here, but that's part of my new responsibilities. And, um, that means I serve on what's called the formation ministries team, which is a team of people who are responsible for, um, kind of guiding the production of resources that help us with our spiritual formation and our discipleship formation and our worship formation and all the different aspects of how we're together, um, in community. So, I'm excited to be part of that team. And it means I get to work with really creative, visionary people to craft the worship experiences for the upcoming World Conference. So, that's exciting and terrifying, all together.

Robin Linkhart 02:47

Wow. Preparing for World Conference. Now, you are no stranger to World Conference and no stranger to preparation for World Conference. And historically, in our current memory, um, you are a member of the Council of Presidents at Seventy as a President of Seventy and you are a seasoned minister, 23 years full time ministry in addition to all your volunteer ministry before that. So, it's a different seat, so to speak. So, in general terms, what does preparation for World Conference look like from this new seat at the table, remembering that you, you are doing this in addition to your continued service on the Council of Presidents of Seventy?

Karin Peter 03:32

So, it does look different. Uh, I will be, I will be really frank. The, the most stress about World Conference usually, for me, is one, how can I be nice for like 16 days straight with all the meetings and conference and everything else for that, that lengthy amount of time around my brothers and sisters, um, in the church? And, two, how am I going to scrape together enough decent looking outfits that, that I manage to look presentable the whole time. So, going from that to, Oh, my gosh, um, this is very different and watching this really fascinating dance of how all the different departments and leaders and volunteers work to make a big international event like this happen, um, in what is still a, a really difficult health situation, um, where we are, all of the different aspects that are playing into, um, how we are in community together. And it just is, um, it's fascinating and at the same time coming from always being a field minister and now looking at headquarters, it's a little bit like figuring out the puzzle, uh, for me and trying to figure out what I need to know, what do I not know and what do I need to know and who do I get that information from? So, that's been the puzzle that I've been working with. So, that's been a really interesting experience. The only, the other thing is I came really late to this team of, um, both the formation team and also the World Conference team. And I'm so aware that it's months away, and I, I am a creative planner, but I would have preferred to have several years to look at this rather than, than, uh, nine or 10 months, or whatever it was when I first, um, started to look at this. So, I have a heightened sense of urgency and everything that's happening when I think about conference and trying to, trying to figure out how we're going to put all those pieces together, but I am I have an enormous amount of faith in all of the people, both at headquarters and all the volunteers and other field leaders who help make this happen.

Robin Linkhart 05:46

Well, I know over the years of attending World Conference, uh, and, of course, you know, in our different forums and councils we have things we're preparing for, for our meetings were responsible for and World Conference resolutions, understanding those, and preparing delegates. But I'm always amazed when we get to World Conference, there is this, uh, awareness of all these moving parts that are taking place and recognizing and wondering, Oh, my gosh, there is so much to this and so many details and how in the world does this all come together in such a way that feels, uh, for those of us experience it feel really harmonious and, and smooth?

Karin Peter 06:25

Well, I'm really hoping all our listeners, if you come to conference, and, um, and there may be one or two glitches that happen, just if you'll be prepared to extend grace, we would all, apprec, I would appreciate it. I can't speak for everybody else. But I would.

Robin Linkhart 06:39

Like at the last World Conference, they always prepare us, you know, in the orientation, uh, the World Conference director tells us all the things and one of those is, you know, in the event of an emergency, you'll be directed. And the last World Conference, we had a fire alarm go off. And we actually had to evacuate the Auditorium, uh, in the way that they told us to do. It was like, Wow! Now, it turned out there was not a fire. But,

Karin Peter 07:03

If anybody pulls a fire alarm this time, please do it during the legislative session.

Robin Linkhart 07:11

Thanks for that, Karin. So, tell us a little bit more about what you and your team are working on. And maybe some of the key principles of consideration that are, are guiding you and your team as you explore innovative ways to meet the needs of a global community.

Karin Peter 07:31

So, we're really working hard to make sure that, um, we continue the tradition of worship at World Conference being engaging and formational and it really, um, opportunity to deepen our spiritual connection with God and with each other when we gather, um, in community. But this year, we're also looking at what are some new or, um, increased or different ways that we can make sure that those in the chamber, the, the Auditorium, um, that gather for worship in person, and those who are gathered in groups connecting remotely, and those who are joining online, sometimes in family groups, sometimes in congregational groups, sometimes by themselves on their phone, that everybody, um, is experiencing that time of worship in ways that are meaningful and, um, insightful and allow people to just increase their understanding of who they are as part of a faith community that is continually listening to how God calls us and shapes us and forms us as we move forward on our journey together. So, that, that sounds like such a big thing and, um, and it is when we think about our global community, and how do we do that for all the diverse ways that we experience worship together and all the diverse cultures that we, um, inhabit across the globe, and also just recognizing and being honest about the fact that, um, we're trying to do this from this medium sized town in the, in the middle of the United States where, where diversity is not fully represented? And so how do we make sure that we're coming outside of our own bubble and our own lens and, and really embracing the diversity of the church and making sure that that's represented in worship? So, that's one thing that we're really trying to make sure we do. Another thing is that because this is what, um, what we've been referring to in the worship team as a hybrid worship, meaning we're trying to make sure that we have, uh, we have interaction for those of us who are gathered live in the chamber, but that we're also having interaction with and hearing from those who are gathered remotely or who are tuning in, um, online in different configurations of gatherings. And how do we do that? How do we provide an equitable experience for the couple thousand people who gather in the auditorium and the three people who are at home, you know, watching this? Um, how, how do we make sure that everybody has equal access to a meaningful experience through worship? So, that's been, there's been a lot of creative energy around that. And what we've looked at is that over the past couple of years, uh, because of the pandemic, we have, we, we have had a forced integration into online worship with Zoom in many parts of the world. And we have learned a lot about what it means to connect, uh, even Zoom, which is kind of the preferred connection in the US, but WhatsApp and some of the other ways that we connect, um, Facebook, other things. Those have been, those have changed and deepened and broadened the capacity and the variations of ways we can connect. So, how do we tap into some of that knowledge that we've gathered through COVID so that we can, um, invite participation in the worship experience from people around the church, the whole global church? We have an opportunity to take some of those learnings from the past couple of years and say, Oh, because we learned how to do this, we could. And then it's like the sky's the limit. Um, we can, we can invite someone to participate in the worship service in offering, uh,

ministry in the worship service, who would never, ever have the opportunity to come to the US, um, either because of time or finances or location or job restrictions or whatever. Um, and that's just mind boggling. The choices out there that we have, the different pathways we can take to make sure that lots of people have the opportunity to engage. And that's, that's a really important part of the providing an equitable experience, um, in worship.

Karin Peter 12:09

And we're looking about, um, how do we engage creatively in music together, which is such a big part of Community of Christ. We love to sing. We love to sing together. Uh, we love, we love the idea of harmony and parts and the, and learning songs from other places than our own, um, around the globe, learning from each other. But we still have, you know, concerns about being in an enclosed space, um, and singing together. So, how do we still provide this wonderful music experience as we come to conference? And how do we make sure that we are, um, including music expression from around the globe in all the different ways that it's resident in the community? And, so, we are, we're looking at that and seeing how, how digital recordings and other factors can allow us to do that in new ways. And in the midst of that, um, COVID COVID COVID. It's like right there. Um, a lot of us feel like, Well, that's kind of maybe coming to a close and it's seven months until conference, maybe we won't have to worry about it. But then there's always the reality of new variants and, and just what we've learned about health, um, when we travel globally, when we're such a, a global community as humankind on Earth. And, so, we're trying to be sensitive to health concerns and vulnerable communities and all of those things. And, so, we're making choices based on that to protect the most vulnerable, which is kind of a, a principle we have in Community of Christ. Um, we see that in other policies that we want to do things that protect the most vulnerable among us. So, we have that. And then in the midst of all that, because I can get really caught up in lists, and we want to accomplish this, I want to make sure that we're, you know, representing our global nature of the church, I want to make sure that we're safety conscious, we want to make sure that we're, um, creatively and musically expressing all these things. In the middle of that, I don't want to lose sight of, this is meant to be an intense spiritual experience of community. God's there somewhere. Let's make room for that. Um, let's let God's Spirit be present and, and do, um, what it will with us as we gather. And so, um, I don't want to get so task oriented that I lose sight of that, um, as well. So, that's, that's kind of where I am right now at seven months out. I mean, we could probably check in a week before conference and have to, you'd have to bleep everything that came out of my mouth. But for now, that's where we are.

Robin Linkhart 14:51

This is no easy task and certainly very multi-dimensional. And I really appreciate those principles that you draw in. Um, and I realize we're seven months out, but what are some of the unique challenges that are popped up along the way as you're, you're working through all of these things with your team and trying to connect the dots, so to speak.

Karin Peter 15:10

So, I think some of the initial challenges, um, that I'm finding is simply, um, the reality of what it means to connect remotely and make time and I'm, I've said before on Project Zion, I'm an introvert. And so I'm perfectly fine staying in my little office and doing everything remote, remotely, which seems odd for a Seventy because there's, you know, I like people, I just don't I, I'm just an introvert. And I don't know

how to, how to reconcile those two things. But I do recognize that my best creative process happens when I'm in person with other people. And, so, I'm making an assumption that many other people feel the same way. And there is something wonderful that happens when you have a group of people around a table, even when we're masked and sitting three feet apart, there's something wonderful about the creative energy that can kind of happen. And so that's been a challenge for me to, to kind of tap into that. It's also been, um, the reality that we have fewer staff at headquarters to make things happen. And, um, and in the field as well. And, so, we have to figure out ways to simplify, um, some things that we've done before and still have them be meaningful and, um, and contain that, that innate sense of sacredness that we've come to expect in our gatherings of worship. Um, we want to be faithful to those who, um, experience worship most deeply from a traditional worship experience, as well as those who experience, um, the Spirit in a more, uh, relaxed or less traditional format. And so how do we, how do we manage that? I don't want to trounce on anybody else's really important pieces of coming together at World Conference in worship. I don't want to just, um, I don't want to excise something and then find out later that was most important to a, a group of people who come. And, so, learning what those things are, has been, um, kind of a challenge. Um, the time crunch has been a little bit of a challenge. And then there's the little challenges that I just wasn't aware of until, you know, I'd come up with an idea and, and then it would be like, Oh, yeah, um, we need to pay attention to ABCD. And then by the time an ABCD are worked through, it was like, Oh, well, that's not gonna', that's just not gonna' work. And, so, some of that creat, I wanna' say this carefully 'cause I'm not sure who's gonna' listen. But some of the freedom of creative expression that you have in the field is not the same as the creative expression that you can have at, at headquarters. And, so, I'm, I'm learning that. That's been a little bit of a challenge. And I think the other piece has been, we just haven't done a hybrid worship before. We've streamed worship lots and lots of times. And that's been great. And we've done some really great work during COVID with, like, Advent services and Easter services that we've done online with pre-recorded material. But we haven't done something where part of its pre-recorded and part of its live, and how do we interact with all of those things. And, so, we have a, we have a team that are really gonna' to help us with that. I mean, the, the people at headquarters are marvelous. They're just willing to, to experiment and try some new things. But also, we have some, some volunteers and some people that are, are helping us in different capacities. Uh, we have a production manager that's going to help us navigate that in person, online, um, kind of, I don't even know what to call it, um, that pathway on how we're going to go forward with that. And we're depending on that. But even things like how do we make sure when we sing together that we are, we are providing the music in ways that people in the chamber can sing together, but also people online in their own home muted. People get together it's not like, it's not like regular Zoom. This is streaming. Can sing as well. How do we do that? So, that it's in three languages and everybody can see the words and the music and we know what we're doing and, and there's just a lot to, to navigate that I'm not all that familiar with. So, and I'm not real technical. And here I am at 63 years old going, Oh! nodding my head like I know what people are telling me. Sure. That makes sense.

Robin Linkhart 19:53

It sounds like everybody from all, um, perspectives and, uh, location, like field, headquarters, have a, this is a learning opportunity for everybody. And it sounds kind of cool, like, like, uh, that compilation of people is adding additional dimension to consideration and people are open to hearing, Oh, wow, that's

how you did it before. Oh, wow, that's why, where you want to take it. (Yeah.) And we're finding new ways all the way around. That's exciting. We

Karin Peter 20:21

We really are. And I'm really lucky because Jake Gardner, who has been responsible for worship for, um, a lot of years in Community of Christ and is just a wealth of knowledge and, and institutional knowledge about the history of worship in Community of Christ, she's, she's been willing, I've asked, I asked her, like, this once a month probably, Now you're still willing to walk with me on this, right? You're still, you're still there, you're still behind me. You're, you got my back when I could do something really stupid, you're gonna help me. And, but she is. She's been just a wonderful guide and, and providing information that helps us make good decisions. And, um, she just has just so much knowledge about how things have been done. And I appreciate her greatly as well as all the other people at headquarters that are, that have just been so wonderful. Every, everything from facilities and, and technology and, um, things you don't think of when you're thinking about worship. Who do I need to talk to, to find out what I need to know? And, so, I've met lots of people I didn't know before going through this and I have a list of names from this trip of people that I will be meeting as I contact them about helping. So, yeah. So, uh, Greg Wilson, if you're out there, I don't think we've met, but I hope you're a Project Zion listener because we'll be chatting soon. Yes. By the way, Greg is the Mission Center president here in Central Mission. So, giving him a little heads up.

Robin Linkhart 21:46

We're also aware that you, uh, work remotely with headquarters the vast majority of the time. So, you live in the state of Washington. (I do.) You have members on your team that live across the US and outside the US including, uh, people that live on the other side of the world. So, how do you navigate this timezone differential, when, which is no small feat either?

Karin Peter 22:09

Yeah, the timezone differential. There are so many things we don't think about when we, when we say things like, Oh, we're gonna' stream worship and everyone around the church can watch it. So, I just want to, I just want to say this up front, this was a big learning for me and, um, Wim Van Klinken, who, um, has been called to serve in the Presenting Bishopric, he really, he really clarified this for me. He said, Karin, when we, when we say we're going to stream worship so everybody can watch it, you do realize that for a lot of people that's the middle of the night or early morning and they're getting ready for work, or, you know, all the other things that happen in their daily lives, or they don't have internet access at that time of the day. Um, so, when we say we're streaming worship everybody, what we really say is, is you know, we're having worship at seven o'clock central time, a couple of nights a week. And if that's convenient for you, you can tune in. And, and, so, that means, from a, a planning perspective, we have to make sure that whenever we prepare an offer that streamed that we can archive that so that people can watch it the next day at their, um, convenient scheduled time, or, um, or even a few days later when it, it, it has a life beyond happening at that, at that time. And, so, that's just a timezone consideration that hadn't really infiltrated my brain until that conversation with Wim on that. Yeah, we can say, you know, we're trying to make everything accessible, but, but we're making it accessible at our traditional timezone and that's not always convenient for everybody, for everybody else. And, so, what does that mean going forward? So, that's just in the back of my mind when we talk

about time zones. As far as planning worship and some of these things, so, I don't do math, I don't know if I've said that before on Project Zion, but I don't do math. Numbers are like a foreign language to me. And, so, um, I do my best with my app on my phone to make sure that we're coordinating, uh, planning times together on Zoom or on Teams where we can get together and, and talk about things. Uh, spent a lot of time doing that. But the other thing is, it's a matter of trust. It's a matter of working with people you trust and saying, uh, Here's what we need to do and we'll get back together so much time and everybody will do this. And then when we come back, we'll go to the next step and just trusting people to be creative and, um, insightful and, um, and connected to the Spirit as we plan not just assuming that we can do all this stuff and then, then we'll connect with God when we worship, but actually trying to make sure, make sure that we're connecting as we're, as we're going through this. But, um, it's been a challenge. I actually had to, I mess up on the time zones all the time and one of our team members is in Australia. And, you know, he doesn't like to get up at four in the morning. So, um, I actually bought six small, inexpensive, old fashioned alarm clocks and I put them on the shelf by where my computer is. And, and I set them all to the, and I labeled them so I have all the time zones of people that I'm working with. And then, um, so, when I go to set something, I can look and then I have like, 17 hours ahead or whatever printed there, so I can actually try to make sure that I'm not asking people to meet with me at, you know, horrible, horrible times. So, when you talk about what the challenges are, you know, sometimes just basic things like timezones can be a little bit of a challenge. So, there you go. Probably more than you wanted to know.

Robin Linkhart 25:51

No, no. I love it. I love it. And I, at one point in my, uh, time working with the church, we picked up the West Coast, which was a new timezone on my chart, and I was thinking upside down and had an expectation that a young adult was going to be at a meeting and they didn't show up for the meeting. And I think we were calling into a teleconference or something. So, I actually placed a call to their personal cell phone to, to say, Hey, where are you? And about 10 minutes, and they didn't answer. About 10 minutes later, I realized I was calling them at an ungodly time of day. It was very early in the morning and we'd already set the meeting to be earlier than what the norm would be and I was very embarrassed.

Karin Peter 26:34

Yes. West Coast, we do end up getting up really, really early for meetings that are done on Central time. Yes.

Robin Linkhart 26:41

Karin, is there anything else you'd like to share with us today?

Karin Peter 26:45

Well, when I think about this, and, and what our listeners might look for, um, in the worship experience at World Conference, um, I'm, I'm hoping that when we come together that we experience some really creative ways to engage together that expresses not just the giftedness of the whole church, but the diversity and the, the cultural richness of who we are as we, uh, come together in, as Community of Christ. But also, I simply hope that our listeners will join the World Conference worship experience as they can, whether they're in the area or whether they watch it online as it streamed or watch the

archived worship later. Um, I'm really hoping that, that people take that opportunity to experience what it's like to come together as a community larger than our, our weekly Zoom or monthly Zoom, a congregational experiences or group experiences. So, please join in, in the worshiping community for World Conference in April from the 23rd to the 29th, 2023. Do my commercial there.

Robin Linkhart 28:01

And how can people find out more about World Conference as the journey unfolds before us?

Karin Peter 28:04

Oh, my goodness. You can go on Community of Christ, uh, website, cofchrist.org, and put World Conference in the search bar and all kinds of information should pop up. Um, and you're always free to contact, uh, me and email me, kpeter@cofchrist.org. If, uh, you have ideas or would like to share a comment, please do so.

Robin Linkhart 28:30

Well, Karin, thank you so much for being with us today and sharing one aspect of our journey as a community to World Conference 2023. You've really, um, opened our eyes to a little bit of what happens behind the scenes and whet our appetite with some curiosity as to how this innovative, new approach and meeting the challenges of hybrid worship in an international community will unfold. So, I'm excited. I'm looking forward to it. As always, a very special thank you to you, our listeners, for spending time with us today. Uh, we will post a link in the show notes to World Conference 2023. So, be sure to check that out. We anticipate updates will be posted on that page of cofchrist.org on a regular basis between now and April of 2023. This is your host, Robin Linkhart, and you are listening to Project Zion Podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Take care. Bye, bye.

Josh Mangelson 29:44

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