

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*. I'm your host, Carla Long, and today we're talking about something that you may never have thought you were going to talk about. We're going to be talking about FSMs, and if you don't know what that means, you're soon going to know what that means. So, I'm here with a panel of wonderful and amazing people. And I'm going to have them introduce themselves to you and then we're going to jump into the wonderful and wild world of SF, of FSM. So, Amy, why don't you go first, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Amy Hoerchler 01:11

My name is Amy Hoerchler and I support the Central USA Mission Field and I live just outside of St. Louis.

Carla Long 01:19

Thank you, Amy. Denise, what about you?

Denise White 01:22

My name is Denise White, and I support the North Central Field and I'm currently living in Ohio.

Carla Long 01:32

Thank you, Denise. Carrie, what about you?

Carrie Welch 01:35

My name is Carrie Welch. I live in Salem, Oregon, but support the Southeast USA Mission Field, so all across the country.

Carla Long 01:45

And last but not least, Moana, what about you?

Moana Faana 01:48

Hey, my name is Moana Faana. I actually live in Lake Mary, Florida, which is close to Orlando, yes, next to Micki and I support the South Central Field.

Carla Long 02:02

Moana, I did not know you lived in Florida. This is already new information for me, so.

Moana Faana 02:06

Well, there you go.

Carla Long 02:08

I'm already learning something on this podcast, and I love learning things. Thank you so much. It's so wonderful to have you all on here. So, I promised our listeners, from the very beginning of this podcast, which was three minutes ago, that we would tell them what an FSM is, so who is interested to tell us what that means? Denise.

Denise White 02:30

We are Field Support Ministers, and that has a variety of tasks that are attached with it, but FSM stands for Field Support Minister.

Carla Long 02:42

It might be a little less dangerous for me to say Field Support Minister than FSM. I feel like I'm gonna mess that up in some way, and it's gonna come out wrong. So, what exactly does a Field Support Minister do? Carrie.

Carrie Welch 02:57

Everything. You do all of the nitty gritty business of the church. We work with Legal, and Fiscal, so we do lots of, all the financial stuff with Shelby. We do all of property sales and property management and insurance claims, so we work with Risk. We support our apostles, we're each connected to an apostle in that field, and a lot of other stuff. Kind of whatever comes up, we pivot and learn what we need to do and do our best to help solve that problem. I like to say that we're kind of firefighters, where we go where we're needed, and rush in and do our best, and we all try and learn from whatever we have just experienced, and we share it with the rest of our team.

Carla Long 03:56

And you aren't the only FSMs in the U.S., right? There's two more, is that correct?

Carrie Welch 04:02

That's correct. We have two more. We have Richard who, Richard Betts in the Western Field and Dena DeVormer who is in the Northeast Field.

Carla Long 04:15

Thank you. Moana.

Moana Faana 04:19

Yeah, kind of piggyback on to what Carrie was saying, yeah, we kind of, everything is thrown at us. We just go at it. But as the, as the name Field Support Minister, we're there to support the field. So mostly what we do, we get in contact with field officers, you know, Mission Center Financial Officers from our field and work directly with them as well as Mission Center Presidents. So that's really, in some ways, who we are in contact with in our fields, so the Mission Center President and Mission Center Financial Officer, and through that we are kind of, also they also throw us into other directions, sometimes directly with the congregation or the other things as well. But yeah, we're gonna go right in. It's like, "Can you go in?" Yes, we're going in.

Carla Long 05:17

Denise.

Denise White 05:18

And sometimes, with having volunteer Mission Center Financial Officers and Mission Center Presidents, they're working a daytime job, and they don't have the bandwidth that they can get in contact with World Church or those that need to be so that we sometimes step in and be that liaison between World Church, whatever that may be, and the mission center officers, and sometimes that includes pastors, or congregational financial officers as well.

Carla Long 05:53

I actually don't think that many, like church members even know how much work it takes to have a congregation working and running. You know, you talked about all these things about Legal and Risk Management, and so on and so forth, and I think it's a surprise to a lot of people. I actually get asked this question every once in a while, I haven't been asked that lately, this lately, but I used to be asked a lot, "What do you actually do all day?" So, what would be, what do you do all day? Like, what, what are you working on throughout the day, and I know as a minister in Community of Christ, that every single day for me is different. I've never had a day that's been exactly the same, but what keeps you busy during the day? Denise.

Denise White 06:43

For me it, it's cyclical. Right now, a lot of my time is going into preparation for mission center conferences. I'm, knowing where we're committed, Robin and I are committed to going to each mission center conference this year, this fall. And I can, almost 100%, say at least some point in my day, I will be working on property sales, and Bridge of Hope, so those are almost two constants. And then you just try to figure out where you've got to fit all the other stuff in.

Carla Long 07:17

Carrie.

Carrie Welch 07:19

I'm right with Denise and I think all of us are. We, that's kind of what our day is made up of, different property sales or property management things, including the campgrounds, and in constant conversation with our mission center leaders. All kinds of things pop up. We just never really know what our day is going to look like until we get into it.

Carla Long 07:42

Oh, yes, Moana.

Moana Faana 07:45

And also, kind of like the firefighter analogy, and once that email pops up, it's like, okay, we got to jump into this and try to solve some of those issues. Like in my field, we had actually three fires in one year,

three buildings that went into, up in smoke. So basically, a lot of my time too, obviously, is working with the congregation in those claims, insurance claims and all that. So, literally, firefighting, literally, almost.

Carla Long 08:18

Oh, no, I don't think that's what Carrie actually meant. I'm so sorry, Moana, that, that is...

Moana Faana 08:24

Oh, no. Okay, so I never, actually, okay, I never actually went into the fire, no.

Carla Long 08:30

That's good. That's not your job. That's good. That's good. There are people who are trained to do that,

Moana Faana 08:35

Exactly. But we're trying to lead the congregation or guide the congregation to how they can go through, obviously, the claim process, which can be can be complicated. And that's why we serve as a buffer between the insurance company and, of course, Legal, Legal Department, and of course, the congregation. How can all this be in line with one another? That's kind of what we do.

Carla Long 09:03

Amy.

Amy Hoerchler 09:06

I would third everything that everybody has just said, but I'd also add, maybe not on a daily basis, but we're constantly talking about how to provide resources or best practices to our field officers or mission center officers just so that, you know, they can feel that empowerment to, to be able to know how to make decisions as well.

Carla Long 09:29

Thank you, Amy. Carrie.

Carrie Welch 09:31

And the one thing we haven't mentioned, but that really is important is we all serve in ministry as well. We all serve as bishops, and so we are constantly talking about generosity and tithing. We are guest ministry at reunions and retreats and missions center conferences, and speak via Zoom frequently. We did that a lot throughout the pandemic but I continue to do that and love that that has been such a blessing to our community, that because so many of my, you know, my congregations are on the other side of the country, I can still participate with them regularly that way. So, while we do a lot of the business of the church, we are ministers and are, you know, all of us continue to lift up all of those.

Carla Long 10:28

That was actually my next question, because I know that when I was a financial officer, the money part was fine, and dealing with all the things that you do is just fine, but the ministry part was the life-giving part for me. And there is no way that I could like, like, only do the stuff that you're talking about on a

day-to-day basis without the ministry. So, I'm so glad that you mentioned that. Any other anything else about the ministry that Carrie just mentioned? Yeah, Moana.

Moana Faana 11:06

Yeah, the ministry part really, yeah, brings everything to life to me and it kind of puts all these issues and also whatever the congregation is, and when you meet them face to face, it can, helps understand what they're going through, and I think this is important to me, and that's why we encourage, of course, we really try our best to try to go around our field to meet with them face to face, and so that we understand what the issues are and what they're going through, and how we can best place ourselves to help them. So, to me, that's, that's the most important, providing, you know, campgrounds and everything else, reunions, just even the congregations after mission center conferences, going to the congregation to meet all of them and to see how wonderful, vibrant ministry they provide in our congregation. I mean, sometime we spend time in our meetings, just sharing about that, you know, some of the wonderful testimonies that are happening. So, yeah, the mission part is definitely important, and all that brings it together, I think, and I think that's the, that's the beauty of it all to me.

Carla Long 12:18

You know, I think about people who have like, accountant, their job is the accountant thing and how much they probably love numbers, and they love all of that stuff, and I know that I love numbers, too, and I love that stuff as well, but there's a whole different dimension to it when you add in the ministry part to it, because it's like, it almost takes you to a deeper level, knowing what those numbers represent. They represent people's giving. They represent program dollars for people to hear more about who we believe God is, and so on and so forth. So, it, just it, I think it just adds just as, such a deeper level of, yeah, just a deeper level. So, I don't know if you agree with that, but that's what I think. I mean, we do have five bishops on here, which is, that's a lot of bishops on one podcast. I wonder, I don't know if it's ever happened before. So, speaking, oh, yeah, Denise.

Denise White 13:18

Maybe you shouldn't have said this was five bishops. Maybe people won't tune in and listen to this, so we haven't planned, it was kind of into the podcast a bit, so.

Carla Long 13:27

Yes, I have heard that when a bishop starts to speak that's when everybody else starts to speak too. I actually have never heard that. I just made that up but I think it's kind of true. So, I love where this conversation is going. And I have another question for you that I don't know if people think about all that often. We talk a lot about mission. We talk a lot about getting out there and talking about who Christ is and who Christ is for us, and we, yeah, this is, we talk about our message a lot. Like, we proclaim Jesus Christ and celebrate communities of joy, hope, love and peace, but there's a lot that needs to go into that before we actually get to that point. And some people don't like thinking that it has to do with money. So how do you see the relationship between money or tithing or however you want to define that and mission? What is that relationship? What does it look like together? Why is it so important? Denise.

Denise White 14:33

I think for me, it's generosity. It's not just money and finances. It's a, it's a generous spirit, a whole life generosity, not only of your money, but of your time and your talents and getting into that rhythm of a generous spirit, and being willing to share your testimony and your frustrations and how you understand things within your life and just sitting down and being in a relationship and sharing. So, for me, it's more than just money. It's, it's generosity.

Carla Long 15:15

Carrie.

Carrie Welch 15:16

Yeah, I want to piggyback on what Denise said too. I think of those that we work with. So, everybody in my field serves as a volunteer. And while there's amazing benefits to people who are able to be compensated for their ministry in their roles, those that I work with do this on top of everything else they do and out of the goodness of their heart. And they are such an example of generosity to me that I'm like, if they can continue to do all that they do, for free, and on top of everything else, I want to do everything I can to support them and help to make that easier for them and straightforward. And so, you know, that's not necessarily me preaching or, you know, doing some of those traditional ministry roles, but I am trying to do my best to support them so that they can continue to do those, those roles and be engaged in that ministry themselves.

Carla Long 16:24

Thank you, Carrie. I'm really interested in that generosity part as well, actually. I have read a couple books on generosity and I've actually done a few presentations on generosity, and I think, and maybe this is just the bishop in me talking, but I feel like the generosity piece is such a huge part of the love piece, and I don't know if we talk about generosity enough, because when we do talk about generosity, a lot of times we are talking about money, you know, and we're talking about, and people don't like to hear about that. You know, like, it's uncomfortable to say, to talk about money, and so on and so forth. But from what I've learned is that, and read, and what I believe is that generosity really changes everything within ourselves. It changes who we are as people, a generous person versus a person who's less generous. A person who's more generous, apparently, from the research that's been done and the books that I've read, have happier lives. They have more, they actually have more money, which sounds really weird, I know, but the freer they are with their time and talent, treasure and testimony, the better they feel about who they are in their lives. So, I feel like, and correct me if I'm wrong, a Field Support Minister also talks a lot about generosity and talks about the importance of generosity. Are there thoughts that you have about generosity, that, that you talk about in your fields, or that you have learned from your people in your fields? I know Carrie already said a little bit about that, but I'm curious about others and Carrie too. Amy.

Amy Hoerchler 18:14

I think I would just share that in, in our field, one thing we talk a lot about is collaboration and the generosity of sharing your thoughts and, and your gifts, you know, with, with others, not always having to recreate the, you know, the wheel. So, you just being able to, to share what you have, you know, even, even with other leaders that are doing your same roles in other areas, and collaborating.

Carla Long 18:43

I love that. That's awesome. Carrie.

Carrie Welch 18:47

My first thought about that was it's the *why* for me. You know, in old tithing models, you know, that was maybe the *what*, you know, the financial part, what's the important and what we have to do to pay the bills, but for generosity it's the *why*. Why do we want to respond in that way? What in this community is life giving and supports us in a way that we want to give back? So, generosity for me, when I think about it, is often focused on the *why* not just the how much.

Carla Long 19:21

I know we don't talk about tithing all that much, meaning a tenth anymore in Community of Christ, and I'm grateful for that. I think it's really important to allow people to decide for themselves, how much to give and decide their true capacity. But I do think it's an interesting concept, and Amy, what you said actually spurred a different thought in me. It's something that Bill McFarlin, a dear friend of mine said a long time ago, and I have, I have yet to forget it. You know, of course, tithe means a tenth, and so he asked me questions like, what would it mean to give a tenth of your steps to God? Or what would it mean to give a tenth of your breaths to God, or a tenth of your heartbeats to God? Or a tenth of your, the miles driven in your car to God? What does that mean? And I do not have answers to those questions, because in some ways, it gives me a little bit of anxiety, but, but I, I try to keep that in my mind thinking about being generous, how the tenth kind of plays into that, and how we could give more of ourselves without feeling like we're giving more, you know, just make it a part of who we are, which I think is probably our goal. I don't know if anybody has any comments about that, but that's what's, what's been going through my mind lately. Moana.

Moana Faana 20:58

You know, when I think about it, generosity, I think about, I think everybody said that already, but it's kind of bringing it back a little bit about their giftedness, you know, the gift to the mission, within their mission center or within the congregation. And when you think about it, definitely a formula isn't of like a tenth. It's not at all, where it's at. You cannot just give a tenth. I mean, to me that's just impossible. You cannot just give a tenth of your service to a congregation and expect that congregation to thrive. That's just not going to happen. And when I go into those congregation or mission center, I see full participation or full service to it. And you can see that. I mean, it's, it's apparent when you look at the members, when you look at everybody coming together, and even the mission center leaders. You can see they're giving they're all even though they're just volunteers, but they are truly giving their all. You can see that happening around them, and you can see that also in that energy that's happening. And I think this is what to me kind of get me going in some ways? You know, I mean, it makes me rethink about this whole idea of a tenth. How did we ever think about a tenth? And I know the understanding is just to give, right. That's the, that's the main, that's the bottom line, to give. But how is it that we came down to a tenth, a formula, instead of just that, just free generosity, that free giving, free love. It is definitely tied to love because nobody would be doing this if they didn't love it. And that's, to me, the basic of it all. At the heart of it all is the love that is there. As they say, was it Rick Warren that said, "You can give without loving. You cannot love without giving. Is that something like that, yeah? Anyway,

so I, yeah, that, that's what always gives to me when I think about it and when I interact with all the leaders and everybody else in the field, I see the love really. I see the love and then generosity in all of that.

Carla Long 23:24

I think that's a really good point, Moana. Like, the whole idea of the telling people how much to give, I have a lot of thoughts about that, probably not for this podcast, but I have a lot of thoughts about that. And I'm really glad that we, as a church, as Community of Christ, have moved away from that idea. I think that it was, was damaging. And I think first, damaging in two ways. One the way you said like people want to give so much more than that and it might have held them back from giving more because they're like, oh, if I only have to give a tenth then I only have to give a 10. Or the people who weren't, couldn't afford to give a tenth, thought it was like an impossible place to get to. So, it was damaging, I think, in both of those ways. So that's really an interesting thought I hadn't thought about that before. Okay, so another question I have, what is the best part of being a Field Support Minister and what is a not-so-best part of being a Field Support Minister? I don't want to use the word worst, what is the best part and the not-so-best part? Denise.

Denise White 24:30

I think the Field Support Minister team works well together. We recognize each other's giftedness, and we know that that's a resource that we can go and tap into. A couple of us like Shelby, eh. A couple of us like payroll, eh, you know, but it, that, we open it up and say to our mission center officers, you know, so and so is the "expert", and I'm using that in quotes, "expert" on this. Why don't you get in touch with them and have them help, they, help you guide you through your issue so that we work really well together and we, I think we support each other well. And we've even had transition of people coming on as a Field Support Minister and leaving, and it seems like whoever comes into the team just fits right in [inaudible]. Amy is our newest addition, and she has fit right in, and we appreciate her giftedness that she shares with us and we work really well together as a team.

Carla Long 25:42

I love that. It's so good to be part of a team where people are appreciated and that you can rely on each other. That's beautiful. Moana.

Moana Faana 25:51

Yeah, just want to add, kind a, yeah, what Denise said. Okay, not-so-best part, Shelby, oo, did I just say that out loud? Oh, my goodness. No, but I am so happy that we got some expert, a Shelby expert in our team. And that's what makes it best. So, the not-so-best part, exactly, turning it to the best part. So, because we got some expert. But yeah, I think this team is amazing, and just kind of a, the resources that we share with one another, I think is also very important. To me, that's the best part as, as far as the team is concerned. And the other one that I would want to lift up is just meeting incredible people in our field. When we go there, I mean, that's the, another best part about it. And Zoom helps us reach out in different ways. So that's another thing. And not-so-best? Still Shelby, sorry.

Carla Long 26:55

Now, I think, Moana, you might need to do a one sentence, one or two sentence explanation of what Shelby is. Maybe people listening to this podcast might not know what Shelby is, and they may think she's a member of your team, that you don't like so much. So maybe you should, really fast, tell us what Shelby is.

Moana Faana 27:08

All right, okay. Shelby is not a person. Shelby is a system that the church uses for, to keep track of contributions, so I guess it's okay, but also to keep track of the finances of the mission centers and some congregation and campground. So, it is a very important system, and sorry, I'm kind of minimizing it, but it is a little complicated for some people, especially in some congregation. So, it does get a little confusing at time. So that's what Shelby is. It's just that accountable, accounting system that the church uses.

Carla Long 27:52

Thank you, Moana. That was a very good explanation. And if your name happens to be Shelby, and you're listening, we're so sorry, we're so sorry that it sounded like we didn't like you, because that's not true. It's not true. Others? What's the best part and not-so-best part of being a Field Support Minister? Carrie.

Carrie Welch 28:09

Okay, so far, everybody has said the team that I have to continue to lift that up. We work really well together, I think. We meet on a regular basis. The part that I love is, the part that I love is that everybody has kind of had experience in different areas, and we share that. So, we've alluded to being experts, and that's far from accurate. But you know, Moana has a lot of experience with fires and building damage, and so we kind of look to him when something like that occurs in our area, you know, and tornadoes and hurricanes. And, you know, so when there's damage, we turn to Moana and say, "What have you learned? And what do we need to be mindful of? You know, I've had a lot of cemetery in my area that we've had to get rid of, which is really difficult. And so, you know, I have kind of become the cemetery expert, and all of us really have, kind of have different areas, which I think is great, because I don't then have the pressure of having to feel like I need to know everything. I just know who to turn to when I have a question. And so, we really do collaborate well, and that's been a huge blessing. And, as Denise alluded to, you know, there have been times when there's an issue in my field, but that I know, she is probably more skilled at in helping support, so I ask her to get involved, and vice versa, and there doesn't seem to be any competition. We really collaborate well, and oh my gosh, it's been the most fun to have this team of any job I've worked in the church with and that's no shade to any other position, but this really has been just a great blessing.

Carla Long 29:59

Thank you, Carrie. And Amy.

Amy Hoerchler 30:02

And I echo them all, you know, being the newest one on the, on the team. You know, the support that they have given, you know, as I've learned, the role has just been, you know, tremendous if you want to

talk about generosity, so in the knowledge that they, they've shared. I also started the role during COVID, so I haven't got to do a lot of the travel that they're talking about, to mission center conferences and such, but I'm really looking forward to, to being out in the field this fall. And, you know, building those relationships even further that we've, you know, that I've been able to start.

Carla Long 30:37

And Carrie.

Carrie Welch 30:40

I was trying to think back of, you had asked specifically, what are some of the best parts and some of the not-so-best parts? And so, my answer to what is one of the best parts, I think, is kind of helping somebody solve a problem that to them feels insurmountable. You know, it may be something that, to me is not a big deal, but they may not have even any idea how to approach, and being able to walk with them through that process and find a resolve, and generally, you know, it's not that difficult, makes me feel really good and productive, and makes them feel very relieved and grateful. And so that is probably one of the best parts for me as well. One of the not-best parts, kind of getting stuck in some of those things that have to be done all the time, you know. We are at a place in the institution where a lot of congregations are dwindling down to low numbers, and when congregations can't support their buildings anymore, we have to work on a process to help them reinvent themselves, but at the same time, sell those buildings. And so that's a lot of what FSMs have been working on over the last couple of years, especially as we are looking for resources to support Bridge of Hope. That's never our first goal, is to just go in and sell a building, but when that is the right time and the right choice, the how-to and the getting that done falls to us a lot, and that can feel a little discouraging, sometimes.

Carla Long 32:23

That would be really hard. That would be super hard. Thank you for sharing that. Denise.

Denise White 32:32

For me, some of the not-best parts is having to be the in between. You know, you've, you've, have hurt and pain, like Carrie had said, and maybe selling buildings or working through that process of discernment of, what are we going to do? And, how are we going to do it? And, and to be there and hear the pain that, that they're having to work through? And yet be, having to say, you know, well, here is where our institution stands and this is how we must do it. And sometimes being that in between can be difficult. You understand, you understand where both sides are coming from, but just being that, that, that in between can be difficult at times?

Carla Long 33:26

Yeah, Denise, I really resonate with that. Ministry is hard, and being a part of an institution is hard. And I totally understand what you're saying, and I totally get it. So, I appreciate those very honest answers, because it's, it's not an easy job all the time. It's not all flowers and rainbows all the time, for sure. So, is there something else that you'd like to say about what an FSM does that you haven't had a chance to say yet? Or is there a question that you wished I would have asked that I didn't ask? Anything else? Okay, well, I'm so grateful that all of you came on the podcast today to answer these questions, because honestly, I should probably know what an FSM does. And I'm so glad that I do. And I'm so

glad that we have such amazing ministers and people working in jobs that may not be the funnest jobs all the time, but they're really important to the mission of the church. In fact, the mission of the church could not happen without you doing what you do. So, I'm so grateful for you. So, thank you again, Amy, and Denise, and Carrie, and Moana, for being on here and for telling us. And I'm very glad to know that Moana is the firefighting expert, and so, if I ever need you, Moana, I will, I will come to you first for sure. Thank you so much, everyone.

Josh Mangelson 35:00

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