

Katie Langston 00:17

You're listening to an Extra Shot episode on the Project Zion Podcast, a shorter episode that lets you get your project Zion fixed in between our full length episodes. It might be shorter timewise, but hopefully not in content. So regardless of the temperature at which you prefer your caffeine, sit back and enjoy this Extra Shot.

Linda Booth 00:59

Welcome to Coffee Connect, story based podcast that talks about real people, and how ordinary people can do extraordinary things. You know, everyone's life is a story with a beginning, with chapters, and an ending and every person's life story connects and intersects with other people's life stories. And these stories are woven into a grand narrative or story. So every life from the beginning of time connects in some way to generations of stories to create the combined stories of families, communities, cultures, traditions, and nations. My name is Linda Booth, and I'm the host of coffee connect. And I love stories and the first story I'm going to tell you about is the connection. How connections and stories intersect and create a combined story. This is a story about two women, Geraldine and Nedra. And Geraldine is a spiritual woman with a huge capacity to love other other people. And Geraldine started a new job in an office with a group of African American women and one told her that if she worked there long enough with them, she would end up cussing just like the rest of them. Well, instead of being put off by this comment, Geraldine intentionally made friends with the women. And during lunch hours they gathered around the table and Geraldine who attended Moss Point congregation in Mississippi, listened to their troubles and their heartaches. And she prayed for and with them. She brought her scriptures to work and she shared Bible stories and verses with the unchurched women and Geraldine shared her testimony of God's grace, and that all people were were of worth and no matter what they had done, or what mistakes they had made, that God still love them. She held and told stories about how God was present in her life and assured them that God was present in theirs. And she also told them about what was happening in her Mississippi Community of Christ congregation. Well as the relationships formed and friendships deepened, one woman named Nedra asked to learn more about Geraldine church. So Geraldine asked her if she and her husband Alvin could meet with Nedra one evening a week to learn more about Jesus and the Church. She's, and Nedra said yes. And ask if her daughters could participate to of course, Geraldine said Geraldine and Alvin invited Nadra and her daughter's to their home. And they visited in Nedra's home as well sharing God's love and about the church. And it wasn't long before Nedra and her daughters asked to be baptized and confirmed members. So you see because of one vibrant witness who shared her God's stories and Bible stories, the lives of Nedra and her daughters were transformed. They then shared their stories with others and a new congregation, a new Community of Christ congregation was birthed in Mississippi, with black and white people worshipping and fellowshiping together. And after several years, Nedra was ordained an elder and became the pastor. And then her daughter Lagenda was ordained and she became pastor. So you see we share these stories and modern day God stories with an expectation and it's an expectation that by telling or retelling the stories to co-workers, neighbors families are in our community. God will be present and engage, inspire, form and prepare more men, women and children for God's and Christ's mission.

Linda Booth 05:14

And so now I'm going to tell you a story. It's a story about being welcomed home, and a story about being welcomed home to people who had no home. Following a preaching service in Tampa, Florida, a woman named Debbie asked to speak with me. Debbie had been praying and since that God was asking her to start a ministry and New Port Richey, Florida where she lived. I prayed with her and told her to talk with her mission center president and he directed her to a membership records, where she could acquire the names and contact information of persons affiliated with Community of Christ in her area. Debbie did just that. And she worked with her mission center president and she contacted the people on the list, and she invited them to her home. She built relationships with those people and invited her neighbors to and when the fellowship and worship group outgrew her home, they moved to a shelter house in New Port Richey Park. One Thursday evening, as the group was singing and praying, men and women with who lived in the woods surrounding the park join them. They came with sacks and bags containing all of their belongings. Debbie and the others were surprised but they welcomed the people. And every Thursday, more and more men and women came out of the woods. And soon the new missional expression outgrew the park pavilion. In fact President Veazey President of Community of Christ, in one of his April presidents address, talked about the 27th baptisms and confirmations on a Palm Sunday because of dedicated people sharing the gospel in Christ's love. For those participating in the New Port Richey ministry, it no longer was about a small groups need to worship and fellowship. It was about addressing the needs and systems that shut out their new sisters and brothers from opportunities to live in right relationships with God, one another themselves and their community. And when the numbers outgrew the park Pavilion and the city requested they find another location. They searched for a good space close to their new homes, their new friends. And because of the generosity of others they rented and began to meet in a storefront on a busy street in New Port Richey. Eventually they acquired three adjoining storefronts that that were uncomfortably or a could seat about 90, because they were small spaces and even combined, it was kind of uncomfortable in those places. When I met with them one Sunday morning, the chairs were so close together, and the rows so narrow, that I could touch the foreheads of those people sitting on the front row and I preached and in the open door and through the large glass windows, I could see 15 to 20 more people listening to the service outside. Near the end of the worship service, Patrick was confirmed a member and following the service, I went outside where many were visiting to find Patrick. I welcome him as my brother in Christ. I need to describe Patrick. Patrick is a tall blond haired man, and he's in his late 20s with with kind eyes. And when I asked how he had been introduced to Community of Christ, he gave me a brief synopsis of his life. After college, he was hired by a corporation. And when the company downsized, Patrick lost his job. He didn't have savings or family to help. So for three years, Patrick lived without hope in his car. Jerome, a homeless man who because of the love and support of this community, had turned around his life and become the pastor told Patrick about Community of Christ. He said this was a different church, a place where people unconditionally loved and unselfishly helped you, not just on Sundays, but every day of the week. Because of this ministry, Patrick found a job, a place to live and a new start in life. And he said to me, "You know what, I missed most those three years when I was homeless. I missed human touch. No one hugs or touches you when you're home. You stink, and they're afraid of you, but here", and he turned and pointed to all the people surrounding, "Here, here, they love you and they touch you. The first time I came, people shook my hand and hugged me. And in their touch I felt loved and upward. In this place, I felt the Spirit."

When we tell modern day stories, we help form disciples who join God where God already is touching lives. These stories, help disciples feel Christ's compassion, and then respond as God does to pain and injustice. And so coffee connect listeners, go out and be a friend. Go out and reach out and tell the stories of your life and intersect and connect with the lives of others.

Josh Mangelson 11:08

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