

Coffee Connect|WorldConference

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

conference, auditorium, serve, apostle, Christ, God, prepare, restoration, priesthood, experience, Temple, call

SPEAKERS

Josh Mangelson, Linda Booth

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 00:33

Welcome to this episode of Coffee Connect, a podcast about ordinary people's encounters with God. My name is Linda Booth, and I've been blessed to travel the world as a minister of Community of Christ, having served as an Apostle for 20 plus years. And I collect stories of God's interactions with ordinary people. In this podcast, I'm going to share my testimonies about Community of Christ World Conference, because it's been my experience when you prepare spiritually to attend that conference, and when 2800 delegates and others who are there visiting prepare spiritually, then collectively, we are very much aware of God's presence in our midst. And I have a long history with World Conferences, because I was raised about two blocks from the Auditorium. And indeed, my parents met at a World Conference a long time ago. My father was a young Missionary Elder, stationed or assigned in Canada, with Community of Christ, and my mother was serving as a young, beautiful Auburn-haired woman, as a switchboard operator. And my dad went over to her and asked if he could leave his books there during lunch. They struck up a conversation. Within three weeks, they were engaged, and within four months, they were married, and married for 69 years. So I know the power of World Conference to connect people. As a child, I attended all those Lord's Supper communion services on Sunday. And I remember as a child, because my father was one of those who handed out the emblems of bread and wine, and all those men who walked in the procession to serve the emblems. And I remember, as a child looking for him. Sometimes I could find him in a stream of men marching in to provide the Lord's Supper to all of us. In 1984, I had a unique experience with World Conference, even though I wasn't there. I was completing my degree in communications at the University of Kansas, and I was driving into the student parking lot. And over the news came the report that the conference had just approved section 156. And in that 156 document, included in the Doctrine and Covenants, was that the Temple should begin to be built, and it would be a place of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the World Conferences as a delegate. And I was also called to serve as an Elder during that time, as well as High Priest. And in 1994, I had the blessing of serving as a counselor to the High Priest's Quorum to Paul Edwards, who was then the President. And he told me that I would be presiding over two of those high priest quorum priesthood meetings, which begin the day during World Conference. And I must say I

was a little intimidated by the idea. I had done Robert's Rules of Order as pastor, but I wasn't a great expert on it. And I had attended High Priest Quorum meetings in the past at World Conference, and it was filled with men. Many of them had been leaders in our congregations and their districts and their stakes at that time. And it seemed as if they took a perverse pleasure in using Robert's Rules of Order, substitute amendments and motions and on and on and on. And so I remember studying Robert's Rules of Order, but in particular, praying and studying and preparing and that week was just such a spiritual high. For me, it felt as if I was walking on air. And presiding, I felt the love of God in the midst of those people. And that was also a special conference, because in 1994, we dedicated the Temple, as I said, to peace, reconciliation and healing of the spirit. And because there were so many people in attendance, some viewed it in the Temple, and I was assigned to view it in the Auditorium. And as I made my way, through those crowds of people speaking multiple languages, on the West side to go into that door, I heard these words, and I said, heard these words, it really wasn't a voice I heard. But it was an understanding that came to me and it was, begin to prepare to serve as my apostle. Now for some of you, you might think that was a wonderful experience. But for me, it was so overwhelming that I didn't go into the Auditorium to experience the dedication of the Temple. I went out the side door, and I walked to my car, and I drove home and I cried the whole way. And I said, God, you've got the wrong person, that must have been a message for someone else, I just can't do this. I waited a couple of days to share my experience with my husband, Doug, and he laughed, and he said, You don't need to worry about that. Nobody knows you. You don't work for the church. And so I took some amount of peace in his statement. But I kept waking up in the night. And hearing that again and again, begin to prepare to serve as my apostle. And I would wake up in the night and argue with God, and I had a long list of reasons why I couldn't be an apostle. First of all, there were no female apostles. Secondly, I have a tendency to cry, because I'm pretty tender hearted. And I'd never seen an apostle cry. I mean, I had these stupid excuses. And then some major ones like, I don't know enough, I haven't worked for the church. I don't have enough experience. Well, in 1997, I was hired to serve in the church as an Assistant Director of Communication, with that be my background. And the next year in 1998, I got a call from the Secretary in Grant McMurray's office, and she asked me if I had time to come over and talk with him. And I remember walking up to his office, and I knew what he was going to say. And I both hoped for it, and I also did not want it to occur. And as I sat there in a chair across from President Grant McMurray, he shared my call to serve God's people as an apostle. I was ordained at that World Conference in 1998, with Gail Mengel, who was the other woman who was called to serve as an apostle in Community of Christ. And two days later, as I was driving home in the dark, from Independence, Missouri, to Lee's Summit, Missouri, I had this impulse to pull into a parking lot of a Restoration Branch. And I remember thinking how strange that was to have that impulse. I drove in, turned off my car, and I began to pray. And I prayed for the people who attended that branch. Restorationists, if you don't know, are a group of fine people who, when women were called to the priesthood, determined that that was not God's will. And so they separated from the church. And they started small branches in the Independence area, and in other places in the United States, and other places in the world. And they did not believe in women in the priesthood, and they only believed in Closed Communion, and which was different from Community of Christ, their doctrine and their policy. And so I went home thinking not much about it. And a few months later, I got a phone call from a woman whose cousin was a pastor in a Restoration Branch asking me if I would meet with him, as well as other Restoration Elders. And so I went to that congregation on a Sunday afternoon. I sat across the table from these men and we talked and we prayed together. And when it was finished, Bob, who was

the Restoration Elder and pastor, He said to me, "I like you." And I said, "Well, I like you, too." Bobby said let's continue to meet. To make a long story short, from that conference and how the Spirit moved in our lives, I began to meet with what I call the Restoration Reconciliation committee. We met for two years. We ended up having two hymn festivals in the Auditorium. And the first one had 3200 people in attendance, because people who couldn't worship together or families who couldn't talk about their spiritual experiences together because of the separation, we were able to come together and separate the fact that we are united in Jesus Christ. I've had many, many experiences at World Conferences. And I know for those of you who have attended World Conference, you have those experiences, too. I want to tell you about my last experience at the last World Conference in 2019. And that was the conference when I retired. And part of what happens, is you stand before the people to share a little bit about your experience, which I did. And as I stepped down off the rostrum, and walked to sit in the midst of the people, I felt the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders. And I felt as if I could float up to the ceiling and the dome in the Auditorium. And I realized that God had carried me 20 plus years as I have traveled and served as an apostle in Community of Christ. And so as some of us prepare to attend this next World Conference, I hope we do so knowing that if we spiritually prepare as individuals, and as everyone spiritually prepares when we come together, that God will bless us, and we can rejoice in the fact that God is moving in our midst, transforming lives, and calling us to Christ's mission as our mission.

Josh Mangelson 11:54

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast. Project Zion Podcast is a Ministry of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze