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SPEAKERS

Carla Long, Josh Mangelson, Ron Harmon

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 00:34

Hello and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host Carla Long, and today we're doing something a little bit different. This is not part of one of our regular series, it's just something that one of our listeners suggested, and I took it and ran with it. We're going to be talking about what it means to be a prophetic people. Not so long ago—or maybe a long time ago, I'm not sure—we stopped referring to ourselves as “people with a prophet” and started referring to ourselves as “a prophetic people.” The thing is, I'm not sure if I totally understand what that means, so I'm going to be asking a lot of different people what that means to them. Today, I'm really happy to tell you that apostle Ron Harmon is on our podcast today to talk about that. Hi Ron, thanks so much for being on the podcast.

Ron Harmon 01:21

Hi Carla, it's great to be with you today.

Carla Long 01:23

Ron, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Ron Harmon 01:26

I live in Independence, Missouri, and I have three children who are all grown now. Two of them actually work for Community of Christ: my son, Daniel, is a pastor out in Orange, California, and Katie is the Spiritual Formation Specialist for Community of Christ. I have the privilege of serving the western United States in my role. I also serve as the president of the Council of Twelve, and work with twelve amazing people who are deeply committed to the vision of this movement, and the difference they believe we can make to the world. I also have an incredible wife—her name is Barb—and she too is

very engaged in the life of the church; serves as an evangelist and is very active locally here in the Independence area. So we're like, all in. I should also say I have a daughter, Lindsay, who, although she's not employed by the church—thank goodness, somebody had to not be employed by the church—but she's also very involved in nonprofit work and is really committed to trying to make the world a better place.

Carla Long 02:58

Yeah, she's a do-gooder, too. That's what I was gonna say—three do-gooder kids, that's pretty awesome.

Ron Harmon 03:02

They are amazing. They are...they inspire me.

Carla Long 03:06

They do. I'm a fan of the Harmon family—I really like that Harmon family a lot. So Ron, thank you for that, that was a great introduction. You're a member of the Council of Twelve, you work in the western field, and you're president of the Council of Twelve—what do you do in your free time?! (laughs) Just kidding...

Ron Harmon 03:21

Right! Seriously though, I do like to have free time occasionally...!

Carla Long 03:26

That's really important.

Ron Harmon 03:28

Actually Barb and I really love to be outdoors. We love hiking and cycling, and our getaway place is Southern California. We're more partial to the mountains than we are the ocean, but we love them both. And Colorado—we try to get Colorado at least once a year together to do some hiking together in the mountains. There's just something about the mountains that makes us both feel just really alive and really connected with the world around us.

Carla Long 04:07

I love that. And that makes me think you need to visit us in Salt Lake City, because, man, there's some beautiful mountains here—you should come out.

Ron Harmon 04:14

Awesome. Okay, you got an extra bedroom for me?

Carla Long 04:18

We do, we do! Okay Ron, let's just jump in. You told me that you are excited about this topic, so let's just start pretty easily and say: what does the word “prophetic” mean to you, and what is your understanding of this term in Community of Christ?

Ron Harmon 04:33

I do love this topic, because I think it is at the heart of what God is up to in the world. I think it is...there's a word that comes to mind for me when I think about prophetic and its "disruption." I guess I see...and I've been really influenced by Walter Brueggemann on this topic—he wrote a book called The Prophetic Imagination, actually I think it was back in the 70s. That has been super-influential on my thinking about being prophetic. I really simply view it as living in the space between the reality of the present and the possibility of the future—under the influence of the Spirit—and being so compelled by that future that we are willing to creatively engage with it and take steps to enact it into being.

So to me, being prophetic is about living in that unsettled, disruptive space where—because we've encountered something in Christ and we can no longer see ourselves or others from the same perspective—there's no turning back and we can't help but see people in situations as they *could* be. As a result of that, we're compelled to act and we have to live in that unsettled space—all the time—as prophetic people. That can be kind of disrupting and unsettling, but I also think it's a really exciting place to be—I call it "living on the prophetic edge."

Carla Long 06:22

Oh, gosh. I keep thinking...I'm thinking about living in that disrupted place all the time—would there ever be a time when you just get complacent in there? Or do you have to try and keep it fresh and new?

Ron Harmon 06:35

Yeah, I think you do, because I think that all the inertia in our culture wants us to basically join in with the way things are; there's so much invested in keeping things the way they are, in terms of those that are in power, as well as, frankly, those who have the most to lose if things change. And that includes us, particularly in the Western world, where on a relative basis we just have so much in terms of materially and wealth, and there's, frankly, a lot to lose by upsetting the status quo. Because I think all these forces in society in many ways are working toward maintaining this delicate equilibrium and not upsetting the status quo, it's easy to kind of get caught up in that, and sometimes to get complacent. I think that's where not only the gospel message, but also being together in community—sacred community—but also being out in the midst of the suffering that's going on around us in the world. All those three things kind of intersecting with each other: our experience together as Christian community, our interaction with the text of Scripture, and then actually experiencing what's going on in the world around us. I think that's what keeps it fresh for us, so that we're not just thinking about our Christian discipleship in a vacuum.

Carla Long 08:29

Oh, that's so much. It's so much to think about, it's like we all have to have our own stuff together too, in order to be there. Because when you don't have your own stuff together, man, it's hard to be in that place.

Ron Harmon 08:43

Yeah, and I guess the other thing I would say is it's really hard when you're part of a movement like we are—Community of Christ, certainly as a part of the broader Restoration tradition—which actually

started with a disruptive event; a young boy's asking questions about what's my future about, and...who should I affiliate with from a Christian perspective—and out of that experience has this disruptive event in his life. If you think about it, everything starts with this disruptive event, and out of that whole experience emerges this movement that we're all part of today. We all hold such diverse perspectives within that movement about what is right, what is justice, what should the future look like; because we come from such different backgrounds and experiences, that sometimes the tendency is to just say, "We just want to hold the community together, so let's not be too...we don't want upset things too much." I think even within the community of faith—within Community of Christ—because we're such a diverse community, and we live in all these different contexts with all these different situations, to be prophetic means that we have to be able to talk to each other. We have to be able to have these disruptive conversations that sometimes are gonna...we're gonna get upset about it, we're gonna get emotional about it, we're gonna get passionate about it. We're going to disagree about the pathway sometimes, to get to that alternative future. And yet, we have to be able to have those kinds of conversations or we can't be a prophetic people.

Carla Long 10:52

Oh, that takes a lot of trust in each other; it takes a lot of underlying love of each other and a deep listening skill. Something that, I know in the United States right now—not just our church necessarily, but in the United States—we just have very little love. We have very little compassion for each other; we desperately want to fight with each other. It's really easy to get caught up in that. What you're telling me, or what I think I hear you saying, is that we need to love each other a lot more. Maybe?

Ron Harmon 11:26

I think in the US in particular, our real challenge is we have to untangle Christ's message and mission from American values, American exceptionalism, and political ideology. We're in a place right now, in the US, where seems like any social justice issue we try to engage in, in the life of the church, there's immediate cries of "that's being political" or you're supporting a particular political party or perspective. The radical message of the Kingdom of God, the peace of Jesus Christ, is not about moving to the left or the right—it's about going deeper and saying: What does this alternative reality that God calls us into look like? How do we work together to create that kind of global interdependent family of caring concern where there are no poor among us and every man, woman and child has the full opportunity to become fully who God created them to be? That is the real challenge, I think, for the church in trying to become a prophetic people.

Carla Long 12:50

Oh, yeah, for sure. I really appreciate how you explained that: it's not right, it's not left, it's going deeper. I love that. Thanks for saying that. I'm gonna tuck that away for another day. Ron, let's just get a little bit more personal here—what is a prophetic moment or moments, that you have personally experienced? And how did you name them as prophetic?

Ron Harmon 13:12

I'm gonna...I'm actually going to share one with you involved my daughter, Lindsay. It's when she was in junior high and she had tried out for a basketball team. When the roster came out, I—how many people are on a basketball team, Carla, do you know?

Carla Long 13:34

Five...well five are on the court at one....

Ron Harmon 13:36

You got to have five on the court, so I think they were wanting, like, eight girls to be on the roster.

Carla Long 13:45

That makes sense. I always fouled out when I was playing basketball, so you always need some people to put in.

Ron Harmon 13:49

Yeah, I try remember...I think I had this right...I think it was eight girls that were going to make the team. Actually, nine girls tried out. One girl was left off the team and I remembered Lindsay came home one day after school and she was deeply—I'll use the word—disrupted by this. She said...I remember her sitting in the living room of our house, saying, "Dad, this is wrong—there's no reason why this other girl can't be on the team." She looked at me and she said, "You have to **do** something about this." And I remember, Carla, in that moment, that my heart began to pound in my chest. I sensed the truth of what she was saying. Lindsay was envisioning this alternative future where the basketball experience wasn't just about competition, but it was about inclusion. It was about the opportunity for these young girls to have an opportunity to be together in community and be a team. Lindsay saw clearly the injustice of cutting one of these girls from the team.

You know, my first inclination was, "Man, I don't want to get involved in that necessarily...I mean, that's a school thing, and its principal and the coach and all that." Lindsay was so convicted about it that the only way I can describe this, is that I sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit in our conversation, and I was convicted that I had to act on this. I called the principal the next day, had a conversation with her about the discussion Lindsay and I had, and as a result of that, the principal talked to the coach and the girl was invited to be on the team. Now, that's a really small example, Carla, but that to me is how prophetic imagination works; we experience something that because of who we are and how we're shaped by the Spirit and one another, we recognize that that is not right, that that's not consistent with God's vision for individuals or for our world. This deep conviction inside us grows that "I've got to **do** something about that." Then we're willing to expose the injustice, we're willing to call it for what it is, and as a result of that we take action and we explore ways that we can enact that alternative future into being. That's what the conversation with the principal was about—I remember us talking about, "Isn't there something we can do here?" And the principal agreed and we took those steps. But I give Lindsay all the credit for that, and honestly, the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was a really moving experience that I had with Lindsay that day in our living room.

Carla Long 17:15

It sounds like it, and you know, one of the phrases that you said when you're telling that story really stuck with me—you said that your heart began to pound, like you...your body even recognized that this was a moment to pay attention to. I wonder if that's part of what it means to be prophetic; like your whole body and your Spirit and your mind and your emotions are coming into sharp focus?

Ron Harmon 17:39

I believe they do, yeah. And that's been my experience is...I remember when I was a young person and we used to have prayer service in the life of the church on Wednesday evenings, and we used to joke around the kids about having bubble gum stuck to our seats. Because you'd sit there and you'd kind of get the sense that you want to stand up and say something, but you weren't sure because you were with a bunch of adults. And all of a sudden you get this courage to go ahead and do it. I think that's a more simplistic example, but I think in many ways, I feel sometimes like we have bubble gum stuck to our seats, and it's breaking free of the chains and the shackles of complacency and recognizing "I can make a difference here." I can actually enact an alternative future here into being. I actually believe that when we start believing that as individuals and as faith communities—oh my gosh, I mean, it's like, watch out, because we're gonna change the world.

Carla Long 18:59

I think that's absolutely true—100% true. That's awesome. I remember those bubble-gum-stuck-to-your-seat moments when I had prayer and testimony service when I was a child, and you just desperately want to say something. I think mostly for me, I just wanted to speak into the microphone—because that's always fun.

Something that my listeners out here in Salt Lake City will be interested in is your thinking on what the Restoration has to do with being prophetic. We're a member of this Restoration movement, and you know that word Restoration means something really special to some people and it kind of chaps the hide of some other people, but for you, what does the Restoration movement have to do with being prophetic?

Ron Harmon 19:46

Yeah, so part of that goes back to the grove experience, where the movement came about as a result of really this holy disruption that was creating this alternative experience. It wasn't just Community of Christ during that time of revival—or back then it would have been the early church—but it was this experience that others were having as well, but was certainly focused in our movement in the early 1800s. That what needed to be restored to human experience was this dynamic faith in God, that God was still speaking in the world, and God was active and present and engaged and working in the lives of people, and the Spirit was moving...seeking to find ways to help people to see this alternative vision of what our world could be, that was captured in the early language of the church: "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion." We had this big ideal that was emerging in the life of the Church of what it could mean for us to be engaged. Then we have these other amazing early texts—the Doctrine Covenants in the life of the church is all about being prophetic; it's about the Spirit disrupting the life of the prophet, and as a result of that, the prophet seeking to find language to try to express what he—back then it would have been "he"—is experiencing, and to try to give expression to that in ways that continue to draw people into that alternative future that God calls us into. Things like, "if you have desires to serve God, you are called to the work"; this idea that all are called, was, I think, this incredible prophetic ideal—that everybody can make a difference in this divine enterprise that we are engaged in. The restoration for me...and then of course, you bring that forward to our current day, and in the expression of our Temple in Independence, there's this amazing line in there about where we're

moving toward, in terms of Restoration as “healing and redeeming agent,” inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world. This idea that restoration is this dynamic process that is continuing to heal, to reconcile, to restore all things into relationship with all other things under this amazing framework of love, and what the world could look like if love was truly embodied and lived out in not only Christian community, but global community. That to me is...when I think of prophetic through the Restoration movement. And the other thing I would just say is, it's captured in our enduring principle, Continuing Revelation. We have continued to fight that principle in some respects in the life of the church. We want to believe in it, and we love to say we believe in it, but then when it calls us to things we're uncomfortable with, we're not sure we like that. Being a people that live the enduring principle of Continuing Revelation is being a people that are prophetic.

Carla Long 24:03

And willing to be—the term you love to use—be willing to be disrupted.

Ron Harmon 24:09

Is there anything more at the heart of the Restoration movement than continuing revelation? I don't think there is and in fact, to me, continuing revelation is what continues to provide the ongoing course correction that we need as disciples and as a movement to continue to move closer to God's ultimate vision for our world, our planet. Our openness to that, to me, is what gives me the most hope for our own movement as part of the Restoration tradition; that we won't become complacent as long as we are willing to continue to be open to the fact that there's more light, there's more truth, there's so much we don't understand, and so much yet to be revealed. As long as we're open to that, we're going to continue to see new things, and we're going to be called into new kinds of actions and engagement that we had never dreamed possible before.

Carla Long 25:27

I love thinking about that I, I once heard a podcast with John Hamer—who is brilliant and wonderful and fantastic—and he talked about in the early Restoration, how things were constantly changing: headquarters was constantly changing, different ideas are coming into play, the name of the church kept changing. That is actually part of who we are. We are a people who...we cannot stay static, and we shouldn't stay static, because once you stay static, you get mired into those ideas that you think that are right and that's the only way it can be. I think you're absolutely right; from the very beginning we were people who were moving, who were changing, who were open, and who were trying to do and be who God is calling us to be.

Ron Harmon 26:17

Absolutely, and actually I would just say one other thing about that, that there was a creative engagement with that future. Some have looked at the history of the church, and sometimes some of the what we might call “interesting” things that Joseph Smith engaged in, whether it's printing your own money because you can't get a bank charter in the Kirtland era. But that came out of an experiment with “what does it mean to be basically this Acts 2 community?”—this interdependent, loving community which has always been at the heart of the gospel vision for our world, and certainly this Zion vision. In so many ways Joseph Smith was continuing to have this sense of unfolding vision, and then trying to find ways to creatively engage with his context, to enact that vision into being.

It's easy, of course, for us in the 21st century to look back on that and be highly critical of it—and there's certain aspects of it that we should be critical of—but there's also this amazing creative dimension to that, that was at the heart of the early Restoration movement that we don't want to lose. That's this idea that prophetic...the prophetic Spirit calls us to continue to experiment and to engage and to learn. That's one of the things I really appreciate about Walter Brueggemann: he says—in his book, *The Prophetic Imagination*—that when we see things as they are, and we begin to see things as they could be, it requires more than just calling into people's awareness that there's an injustice. It calls us to something beyond that; it calls us to begin to creatively engage with that future in ways that expose the suffering around us, but also reveal creative solutions to how that suffering can be alleviated. I actually feel that that that gene is in our movement, particularly when you look at where we started, in Kirtland with this really, frankly, community that was in abject poverty. Many of the things that we were trying and we were engaging and we were doing out of a sense of creatively trying to engage in creating that alternative future for people, in which they could live together in community and support one another in love. That's an amazing goal and it's at the heart of the gospel and at the heart of our Zion vision.

Carla Long 29:32

I think there's just so much involved, it seems like, with this being a prophetic people kind of stuff. There's a lot involved. Listeners, I've given Ron a list of things—I'm going to read them to you and the question for Ron is: "What was the prophetic in these things?" I'm going to read the list and Ron, I want you to choose something and talk about how you see the prophetic in it—does that sound good?

Ron Harmon 29:59

Sure.

Carla Long 30:00

The list is: the concept of Zion, ordination of women, the different lenses of discernment, the LGBTQIA+ communities, diversity in leadership, attention to the poor, the international diversity in going across borders for ministry, non violence, process of common consent, and signal communities. That's a really big list and I don't think we'll make it through all of them.

Ron Harmon 30:30

I don't think so.

Carla Long 30:32

Unless Ron, you have a ton of energy this morning.

Ron Harmon 30:36

I don't think your listeners would want to hang in that long.

Carla Long 30:40

You never know. Ron, so why don't you choose one of those and talk about what how you see the prophetic in one of those?

Ron Harmon 30:48

Sure...gosh, it's really hard because...well first, I would just say that every one of those had this really profound prophetic dimension to them. I think what I'd like to do is, I'm going to pick LGBTQIA+ and the process of common consent, because those two for me really go together.

In Community of Christ, one of the things I think that we have been on a journey of discovering, is that how we are community together as brothers and sisters in Christ, says as much about who we are, in some ways, as the outcomes we achieve, or who we say we are, or what we say we believe. We've been experimenting with the process of common consent in Community of Christ over the last several years, and that really, in many ways, first came to, I think, a new level of combination in the LGBTQIA+ question before the church with respect to ordination and marriage. Particularly as it related to the USA national conference.

That was just a fascinating experience, because we were struggling, I think, in the United States, and some people I think are still struggling a little bit, with the question of understanding human sexuality and what that means and how it's connected to the worth of persons, and recognizing that there's so much more diversity in the human family—and, frankly, creation in general—than we fully understand. That all of that diversity has been lovingly created, that we might not only embrace and understand just the richness of this experience that we call life, but that also that we might understand what it means to be in relationship as this diverse, loving community.

That was a real journey for us leading up to the USA national conference, and the prophetic vision, which really was prophetic at a time when many in the Christian community were drawing lines in the sand and saying who was included, and who was not included, who's in and who's out, who's a sinful person and who's not. Community of Christ went on this prophetic journey using the lenses of discernment that were shared with the church by President Steve Veazey—which is really a multidisciplinary approach to discernment and discerning God's will—and step back and ask the question, “What is God's will here?” We try to understand what Scripture says, but we're also people that believe in continuing revelation, and is it possible that there's more here to understand about this, than many of the ways that in the past, perhaps, more mainstream elements of Christianity have characterized the issue of human sexuality and how it gets lived out in the life of the church, in the life of a disciple.

We went on this journey together, and we learned about Scripture and how to interpret Scripture, we listened to stories of our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters, we opened ourselves to the continuing influence of the Holy Spirit in community, we learned about the social and psychological ramifications and questions of human sexuality. All of that led up to this national conference experience, where we said it's not good enough to just have a majority rule vote. An issue like this is so important in the life of the church that we need to construct a process where we can truly hear one another's perspectives, why we hold those perspectives, and work to the highest level of consent possible on an important theological and missional question like this, that gets at the heart of Christian invitation and inclusion. We had that journey to national conference, we listened to one another's stories, and as a result of that

experience achieved over two thirds of that conference body voting to move forward with ordination and marriage for the LGBTQIA+ plus community.

But to me as profound as the result of that national conference, was how we did it. We engaged in a process of discernment; we created space for people to ask their questions, and explore and try to understand the multiple dimensions of the issue and the questions before us more deeply, and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Then as we journeyed to the actual conference experience itself, we provided again that opportunity for the Spirit to do its work in the community gathered, and as a result of that we were blessed. I remember the first break we took after our first session of the national conference, and the USA apostles serving at the time...we gathered in a room to just regroup before we went out for the next session. We just paused and gave thanks—it was just spontaneous, got in a circle, joined hands and we gave thanks to God for the amazing Spirit that was present in that conference. It ended up guiding us through the whole conference, and leading us, I believe, to the outcome of that conference, because we were open to continuing revelation and had constructed a process that gave all the diverse voices the opportunity to be heard and honored and valued, and then for us to have a way then to express the direction we believe God was calling us to go as a USA church.

I could go on and on about this. But to me, that was just such a profound example of being a prophetic people, creating the space to live in between things as they are, things as they could be, and being open to that possibility by the way we journeyed toward that new understanding together.

Carla Long 38:21

I love the way you describe that. I used this word earlier in the podcast—to me, it talks about an immense level of trust; trust in the process and trust that God is walking with us. And to not be so invested in the outcome—like we are in a lot of things in our lives—that we were just working toward a goal and wanting to get this one thing done. No, the goal, if you want to use that word in this instance, is being in the presence and being in the moment.

Ron Harmon 38:57

Well, it is and as I remember this very distinctly as a USA apostle at the time; we made a conscious decision that we weren't going to go out there and try to hammer people with our perspectives on this issue. In fact, we made a decision that we were going to *[unintelligible]* be ourselves, we wanted to be that sanctuary of openness of Christ peace, where people could explore a variety of perspectives with respect to the questions before us on marriage and ordination. We specifically did not articulate our specific position on those two issues. Now, we certainly always provided alternative perspectives when we were talking to somebody, but...and I remember actually getting hammered from some people on email about “I can't believe you guys aren't sharing a more prophetic witness about the direction we should go on these two issues.” But as I look back on it now, I...in some ways I feel it was prophetic to create that space. We actually had to get ourselves in a place of almost “holy indifference,” which involved a tremendous amount of trust that we had engaged in a process that was well constructed and that was depending on the movement of the Holy Spirit. We were going to trust in the Spirit and the people as we journeyed. And of course, we did a lot of really concrete things like develop education materials and things to help people on that journey, but ultimately, we were trusting in that prophetic

Spirit to move among our people as we went on this journey, and then at the conference. We were incredibly blessed as a result of that.

Carla Long 41:07

I think about all of the work that went into the national conference—I mean, years in advance we were focused on it, we were intentional about it. Do you think that's what it takes in order to be a prophetic people—all of that preparation?

Ron Harmon 41:23

Well sometimes it does. I think some...there's times where people really get frustrated with the church, that we're not moving fast enough on things. Jesus had the luxury of being able to act unilaterally—I think he had a couple disciples around him, but he wasn't trying to lead a big movement. He was able to move quickly and make decisions in the moment in terms of how he wanted to interact and what he was trying to model in terms of that alternative future. I think that in Community of Christ, that's part of what we are trying to model that's so hard for people to understand at times. That a decision, for example, we may make in the United States has impact in other parts of the world where their cultural context is different and they wouldn't see that issue the same way we would. What does it mean for us to be this global faith community and move together on universal principles of the gospel, and yet at time recognize that there are times where the application of those principles may look different in different contexts because of our understanding and our evolution with respect to the gospel, and how it gets applied socially, culturally—ways that it's lived out.

I think that we're going to continue, as Community of Christ, to try to live in this tension of unity and diversity, and model what that looks like—which I think for some will be frustrating, because they'll never feel like we're moving quick enough. But I would say to people, in the Spirit of asking what it means to be prophetic: What value is there, when we simply try to make bold cutting statements about a position that we may hold, if all we're doing is simply creating another division in the human family? What does it mean for us to deeply listen to one another, and to say that our understanding and vision of the gospel and the Kingdom and where we understand God calling us to go—there's so much more there we hold in common than the differences that we have. Aren't those things more compelling than the differences that divide us? Those things that we're struggling with in terms of—even issues right now in the life of the church—isn't it worth going on the journey together and bringing as many people along on that journey as we possibly can be, and modeling to the world that there's another way to come together, to discern, to make decisions, and to move into that alternative future together. That's what I love about Community of Christ, and I know some people get frustrated with it, and I do too—there were times I had deep feelings about the LGBTQIA+ question before the church with respect to marriage and ordination. I personally...I wanted to move ahead on that much faster than we did, but I also saw the value of the process we were engaged in, which is part of that process of being a prophetic people; to help people to first envision things as they are, and understand the reality of our current circumstances. But then to also be able to envision that there's the possibility of this alternative future that God calls us into, and what does that look like, and how do we encounter, how do we discern that together, and take steps into that together—and frankly, that does take time.

Carla Long 45:34

It takes a lot of time. And as you're speaking, something just popped into my head. I don't know if you agree with this or not, but would you say that being prophetic people really just involves getting out of the way? Like...our own personal...this is what I think's right, this is what needs to happen, all that stuff—we need to put that aside, and let...get out of our own way.

Ron Harmon 45:57

Yes, absolutely! You are so right, Carla. Let me just share this one thing. I was at a training recently—a couple months ago—it was called Dynamic Dialogue out of Sacramento. I've always kind of known this, inherently, but it really...I don't know for some reason it just kind of hit me in the head like a two by four when the facilitator said this. She said this to me, she said, "We don't see things as they really are." All of a sudden, it just really struck me that because of my collective life experience—I'm a white male, I live in a country of privilege—I've had a certain collection of experiences in my life, and as a result of that, that shapes who I am, what my conceptual frameworks are and how I see the world. And frankly, there's times where there's things that I just don't see. It's not because I don't want to see them, it's just because the way I am, and frankly, that's why it takes community. We need one another's perspectives, we need the influence of the Holy Spirit to help us to be able to see what we simply cannot see. And like you said, to get out of the way. If we would all embrace this idea—get up every morning, look in the mirror and say to ourselves, "I don't see things as they really are." Wow, that would transform our world. We would be more open, we would more deeply listen to one another, and I believe that we would begin to be shaped more by our encounters with others and the Holy Spirit in the world, in ways that would totally transform us and call us to new ways of being as disciples and communities.

Carla Long 48:03

Oh, Ron, I think we got there. I think we're there. I love thinking about...one of our enduring principles is Blessings of Community. I love being a part of this community. But I think you hit the nail on the head, when you said: we must be a part of a community in order to understand God more deeply, and understand how people see the world around them and how people see God. We're never going to understand that if we just stay within ourselves all the time. That's awesome. Thank you so much for saying that. There's a sermon, or five sermons in that.

Ron Harmon 48:41

Yeah, I think there probably is.

Carla Long 48:43

Well Ron, thank you so much for being a part of the podcast. I really appreciated talking with you about it, and I can't wait to hear what others have to say about what it means to be a prophetic people. Because listener, we're going to be interviewing a lot of different people about what prophetic people means to them. Ron just happens to be our first—so thank you so much for saying yes. I have to ask: is there something that you wanted to say that I didn't ask?

Ron Harmon 49:09

No, not really. I guess I would just say that: isn't it incredible to be a part of a movement that believes it is participating in bringing about God's alternative future in the world. **That** is what keeps me engaged in the life of this movement, is the vision that we have for our future—that we are not satisfied with

things as they are. And because of our continuing encounter with a living Christ and community with one another and the world that we engage in on a daily basis, we see this alternative future that is so compelling to us that we are audacious enough to think that we—this small little movement called Community of Christ—can be the catalyst for big change in the world. That's why I'm a part of this movement. I hope everyone embraces just how powerful this idea of being a prophetic people is and how transformative it can be for us.

Carla Long 50:31

I love that. Thank you so much, Ron, for being on the podcast. Thank you for your thoughtful and wonderful answers. I really appreciate it.

Ron Harmon 50:39

Thanks, Carla. Great to be with you.

Josh Mangelson 50:48

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