

Open Topics | Hymnal with Joey Williams

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Joey Williams, Josh Mangelson, Carla Long

Josh Mangelson 00:22

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Carla Long 00:55

Hi, everyone, and welcome to the *Project Zion Podcast*. I'm your host, Carla Long, and I have a very special guest with me today. He's a dear friend of mine, and I met him on my 18th birthday, so just like four or five years ago. Anyway, Joey and I worked together in Europe for Community of Christ. Joey is the mission center president for the Western Europe Mission Center, the Eurasia Mission Center, and the British Isles Mission Center. That's a lot. Joey, welcome to the show, and thanks for taking time out of your busy, busy schedule. We are so happy that you're here.

Joey Williams 01:30

Thank you. It's great to talk to you.

Carla Long 01:31

Yeah. And so, everybody now knows your name is Joey and that you have a huge job, but tell us more about what you do and just about yourself?

Joey Williams 01:41

Well, you might say that I'm the leader of mission in some ways, that's kind of another title that's used with what I do, but I'm the mission center president for three different mission centers. So that means that I'm kind of the administrator over the organization of the church and helping to live out mission all throughout Europe, from the British Isles down to Spain, up to France, Holland, Germany, Hungary, and all the way into the eastern countries of the Ukraine, Georgia, and Russia.

Carla Long 02:16

Well, that sounds pretty small, like not a really big deal.

Joey Williams 02:19

Yeah, tiny.

Carla Long 02:21

Do you, do you enjoy what you do?

Joey Williams 02:24

Well, I love the different people, the different cultures, and even using some of the different languages learned over the years.

Carla Long 02:31

Yeah, how many languages do you speak?

Joey Williams 02:33

Just one at a time, Carla.

Carla Long 02:38

But you're so talented. I thought you'd be able to learn how to speak at least two at a time by now.

Joey Williams 02:43

Well, I do actually put a lot of words sometimes in different languages into different sentences, so it doesn't always come out right.

Carla Long 02:50

That's true. So, I know you speak English and Spanish and French. Is there any other languages you speak?

Joey Williams 02:56

Yeah, I used to be a youth minister in Holland, in the Netherlands, and so I did pick up some Dutch while I was there, and then I do my best at German.

Carla Long 03:05

Oh, I'm sure that the Germans would say that you do pretty well on German,

Joey Williams 03:10

The kind ones.

Carla Long 03:14

When I was in Europe, I know that I used to do pretty well in the languages, but only on menus. Would you agree?

Joey Williams 03:20

You were amazing.

Carla Long 03:21

Thank you.

Joey Williams 03:22

In fact, I think you knew what everything was. You were our interpreter every time you were somewhere.

Carla Long 03:25

Only for the menus.

Joey Williams 03:28

Yes.

Carla Long 03:29

I only, I only really need to learn the important stuff, and for me that's food, as we both know.

Joey Williams 03:34

Carla knows her food.

Carla Long 03:36

She does. So, you're working in Europe now, but part of this podcast is about the hymnal project, and you worked on the hymnal project as well. Can you tell us more about that?

Joey Williams 03:48

Yeah. When I went home from the Netherlands, when I went back to the United States, oh, that was, what, 10 years ago, I was given an opportunity to become a translator for Community of Christ in French, French and English. And then they also offered me another job and they said, "We have two positions that could be part of your job. You could either be the World Church Children's Minister, working with children from about age six to 12, or you can work on the next hymnal project," and I immediately was like, singing, hymnal, I'm there.

Carla Long 04:23

Done and done.

Joey Williams 04:23

It was just, yeah, I had been a youth minister for 10 years for the church already, so I was ready to try something new and plus my background's in music, and so I decided to be a part of the hymnal project.

Carla Long 04:34

Tell us more about that background in music.

Joey Williams 04:38

Well, after high school, I went to Eastman School of Music in New York. I eventually graduated with a degree in music at Graceland University and then went on to study in a master's program at the Conservatory of Paris in, in Paris.

Carla Long 04:57

Well, that's pretty cool. So, you, you do have a love of music. What's your favorite kind of music to sing, or to play, or to listen to?

Joey Williams 05:05

Rap. I love rap music, but especially I think it's also because of my love of like learning languages, but I love international rap music, so rap in different languages, in Dutch, or in Spanish, or French especially.

Carla Long 05:26

And I do remember a moment I think when you and I were even rapping Vanilla Ice together at a church camp dance. Was that, am I dreaming?

Joey Williams 05:34

Well, I'm not, I don't think that was one moment. That was probably several moments.

Carla Long 05:39

Probably several. That's right. You and I, we like to rap together.

Joey Williams 05:43

Yeah, we've done pretty well.

Carla Long 05:45

Mostly in an embarrassing way, but we like to try.

Joey Williams 05:48

Exactly.

Carla Long 05:49

So, what was your actual job on the hymnal project? Did everybody have a specific thing they had to do?

Joey Williams 05:56

Yeah, at the beginning, it was really more just about being a part of the team. So, it was, this was a five-year process to put this hymnal together, not including some of the years that went into that beforehand with other people. But once they put this team together, there were seven people on the team, and at first our job was really to take all of these submissions that people were giving to the church, people were sending in their submissions, and also looking through the previous hymnals that we had, as well as some other denominations' hymnals that were comparable denominations to Community of Christ. And we were selecting music that would then be considered to go into the next hymnal. At the time we were calling it the "next hymnal" because we didn't have a name for it.

Carla Long 06:44

And so, when, like in that five-year process, did you like really get started, like choosing those hymns? How long did it take just to gather?

Joey Williams 06:53

So that process probably took about two years. We sent out all of these submission requests to different people, and we began receiving all sorts of submissions. And I don't know the numbers exactly, but I know that our team, our specific team, and this was, other songs had already been weeded out, you know, they had been already pulled out of the selection process, but we saw probably over 3500 selections.

Carla Long 07:23

Oh my gosh, that, that is an amazing number. So...

Joey Williams 07:26

Yeah, to come down to the 664 that we now have in the book.

Carla Long 07:30

Right? So, were you like more interested in the melodies and the music of it, or in the words, or did you have to just like think about them both together all the time?

Joey Williams 07:41

Well, that was an interesting part of the process, because one of the directives that we were given by the World Church Leadership Council was that this project had to talk about the identity, mission, message and beliefs of Community of Christ, what we call the IMMB (the identity, message, mission, and beliefs) of Community of Christ. And so, what that meant was, or how we interpreted that is that we stripped all of the songs of their music, so of the notes, and we only looked at the words. So, the first time that songs came around, we only looked at the words, and we asked ourself the question each time, "Is this part of who we are? Is this part of our identity, mission, message, and beliefs?"

Carla Long 08:28

That would be so, so hard?

Joey Williams 08:31

Yeah, it was, well, it was long, it was just the long process, I mean, continual. It was just like reading poetry over and over and over again. And we would, we would receive like a batch of about 100 songs, and then we were to rate them, you know, give them one, two, threes, whether they should definitely be in the book, or should still be considered to be in the book, or should not be considered for the book. And we just continually received these batches of packets of music, well of the words, and then we would come together and we would discuss every single one of those.

Carla Long 09:06

So, are there any hymns from that process that stood out to you that, that didn't make the hymnal, that you really wanted in the hymnal but didn't make it or anything like that?

Joey Williams 09:16

Well, yes. I had a song that I really wanted to be in this hymnal and it was, well, it's a, it's a African, it comes from Africa, and it's called *Hamba Nathi Mkhululi Wethu*. You want me to sing it?

Carla Long 09:36

Yes.

Joey Williams 09:37

It goes, "Hamba nathi mkhululi wethu. Hamba nathi mkhululi wethu. Hamba nathi mkhululi wethu. Hamba nathi mkhululi wethu."

Carla Long 09:50

I know that one.

Joey Williams 09:51

Yeah. So, it's a song that I love, and it was a song that I had actually put into the submissions, and was hoping that it would make it, but it didn't make it.

Carla Long 10:05

How do I know it then? Do I know it by hanging out with you?

Joey Williams 10:09

Probably. I've sung it at quite a few events, and it's a fun song because you get the basses doing that part that I just sang, and then you get the upper voices singing, "mkhululi wethu, mkhululi wethu, mkhululi wethu, mkhululi wethu".

Carla Long 10:24

What do the words mean?

Joey Williams 10:26

Well, and that's actually what it all came down to, of why it didn't make it in. The song has kind of several meanings, like it's kind of transformed within its African context over the years. And so, some people have seen it as a war song because it kind of says, yeah, "My warrior will go with me and protect me." But that word can also be translated as "my Redeemer," or "my Savior". You know what I mean? So, there's a lot of this, this question of language and what words are being used. And because of some of that confusion, the committee just decided that it probably shouldn't be in the hymnal.

Carla Long 11:05

Right? I mean, it really would go against our message of peace, wouldn't it, if people took it as a war song? So, I guess I can understand that.

Joey Williams 11:12

Exactly. The way it's usually sung when it's sung in English is, "You are holy, you show me the way? You are holy, you show me the way. You are holy, you show me the way." Yeah.

Carla Long 11:25

Right.

Joey Williams 11:26

So, it's, it's interpreted completely different than what the actual words are?

Carla Long 11:30

Wow. So that, I mean, even right there shows how complicated this whole process was. Because not only do you need to know what the words are, you need to know the message behind the words and what is hidden underneath the words and, like, I don't know what, where that song comes from, but if someone were to listen to that song and be like, "Wait, we're a Peace Church. We don't sing those kinds of songs," then, you know, it could be really detrimental to their worship experience. So, you have to know a lot about these songs that are coming in.

Joey Williams 11:58

Yeah, there was a lot of research that went on with that. We had probably, kind of, we had our core group of seven people, but in addition to that, we probably had 70 other people around that did all sorts of research for us. For example, we had an African American committee that just looked at the African American songs and gave us suggestions of what definitely needed to go in, and what songs we might want to avoid. We also had a Native American committee that looked at songs like that. We had a language committee that brought up many issues when we were going through different languages. We had a theology committee that went through all of the texts and looked at the theological implications and how it dealt with who Community of Christ is. We had a literary committee that just looked at the way that the poetry worked and the English that was being spoken, and if it was, if that was good or not. That same committee, I believe, went through and looked at if we were being respectful of different genders, and if we had, you know, too much language that was male language, or male dominant language, so that we had many different metaphors for God and that we, we included different genders in the ways that we spoke about God.

Carla Long 13:15

Oh, my gosh, I am so grateful for all of this work, and the amount of thought that had to go into this. I like, in many ways, I had no idea that this hymnal was, had so much depth to it.

Joey Williams 13:27

Well, that was part of the blessing of having not only that smaller committee of people with some really great experiences. I mean, we had a former, one of the presidency, Peter Judd, who was on that committee. So, we really had a depth and wealth of experience in Community of Christ. The project manager, Lauren Hall, she just did an amazing job of leading us through that process. We had Jane Gardner, who is now our Presiding Evangelist, and at the time, she was running kind of our formation ministries of all the different resources that we provide and, and create for the Church. And so, I mean, just her wealth of knowledge was incredible. Jan Kraybill, our principal organist, she, and our musician, basically our church musician, she is just a phenomenal musician. And not only is she a great musician, but she held us to task in terms of who we are and what the historical implications are for the songs that we were selecting, like, do they come from a Catholic tradition? Or does it come from a more Protestant tradition? And so, she had a really great historical knowledge of these hymns. David Bolton, who was the youngest person on our committee, who came with not only a great ability to organize, with all of his

computer skills, and he was actually one of the people that set all of our notes in the Finale program that we used to kind of create the page and what it would look like, but he also has a great musical knowledge and used all of that to really help get, he actually wrote some of the songs, some of the music, and did some of the arrangements of the music that's in there.

Carla Long 15:07

Right. From what I heard, David Bolton's name is mentioned in here more than any other name. I don't know if that's true or not.

Joey Williams 15:12

Yeah, he did so many fixes. And he, he really did a lot of research on what arrangement came first. And so sometimes we chose an earlier arrangement, to go back and to kind of more of a, like an original arrangement that was done of some of the music. But then he also found places where maybe the harmony wasn't as full as it needed to be, he or Jan Kraybill, or other people on the committee, and then they filled that in. So, he had a real major part in that.

Carla Long 15:41

What a huge job. I've actually seen your name in here quite often with translations for French. Do you know how many songs you translated into French?

Joey Williams 15:51

Oh, gosh, I have no idea.

Carla Long 15:54

A lot. I think it's a lot.

Joey Williams 15:56

Yeah. There were a lot. And that was a really fun process for me, because although I was on the translations, and part of the translations team for Community of Christ, translating documents is a whole different story when it comes to music, because you have to consider not only will this sound good to the ear when it's being sung, where do you place the emphasis of the word with the note that's being sung. You know, you can't just sing "a" or "the" on a really great, important note. So it was, that was a great learning process for me. I also really enjoyed working with people who might not be translators of music, to kind of come up with creative ways of how do we get to a translation that is not only respectful of the original text in its original language, but then also can really be loved and accepted into the new language that's being sung.

Carla Long 16:52

That sounds like so much fun, actually. I mean, it sounds like a ton of work, but, but so much fun. Like, there's just a lot that goes in and you can kind of choose where you want to be. Is that, was that right or am I making that up?

Joey Williams 17:03

No, you're, what's so interesting is the way, especially my part, kind of working with some of these international hymns, the way that that just kind of evolved organically throughout the process. There were two directives given by the First Presidency and the World Church Leadership Council. One was that we respect our IMMB, the identity, mission, message and identity... One of them was that we respect our IMMB, the identity, mission, message and beliefs of Community of Christ. But the second directive with that, was that this, this book be something that represents the global nature of the church. And with that directive that was kind of weird and scary, and we didn't know what to do with it, but what that ended up being is a book that has about 100 songs that we call our core repertoire, that we kind of teach all over the world, and often we teach in its original language. So, we might sing Spanish when we're teaching this in Japan, or we might sing Korean when we're teaching something in France. So, it's just, it's just crazy what this became and how people are grabbing on to that international identity. You can, one of the things is when you look into this book, you cannot deny that Community of Christ is a worldwide community. And I think this book really shows respect we have for how we are becoming a worldwide church. And not just, I don't know, for me, it talks about how we are as a prophetic people, that we are beginning to see the prophetic coming out of all of these other traditions and cultures around the world.

Carla Long 18:53

That's right, because it seems like for a long time, you know, we were maybe too much of an American church. You know, we, we were founded in the United States. We, our headquarters are in the United States. The main language here is English. All of our hymns were in English. But you're right. I mean, we have tried so hard to become an international organization, and from what I hear, this book is the most international hymnal that has ever been made, ever, ever, ever. Is that true?

Joey Williams 19:21

Yes. That is true. Among hymnody, in terms of song books that have been created by different, different denominations around the world, in the research that we've done, what we have found is there are many denominations who might take an entire songbook, let's just say that there's a songbook of 200 songs that a denomination might say, "Okay, we want this all now to be translated into Spanish," and so they will take all of those songs and translate them into Spanish. But what the product ends up being is then a song book in Spanish of 100 songs that basically are not songs that come from Spanish speaking places.

Carla Long 20:01

Right, so they may or may not know them.

Joey Williams 20:04

Yeah, so what makes this book really unique is that it is a compilation in an English, like, yeah, the book is destined to English speaking places, you know. And basically, for the Church, the main places that we were looking at was Australia, United States, Canada, and the British Isles, in terms of places that would buy this book to use, to, to sing in English. But what it has within it is 29 different languages that can be sung within that book. So, this was a whole new way of looking at what it means to put in international music in a song book. There are other denominations that might have a song or two in a different language, but no place that we have found, no book has this much representation of a global

church. And so, what this means is when we come together for international events, we have an actual group of 100 songs that we can sing together as a people. And from time to time, if you happen to speak an interesting language like Chichewa from Zambia, then you might know Ichibemba, sorry, Ichibemba from Zambia, then you might be like, "Oh, this is my language", or Chichewa from Malawi, and you're like, "Oh, my gosh, I know this song." So.

Carla Long 21:26

That's right. And it really speaks to our Enduring Principles. I mean, it, it, what it says to those people is, you have worth. Your language has worth. We want to learn your language, and we want to know who you are through that language. So that, I, we, you're right. It does speak to who we are as an organization, I think. That's a wonderful point.

Joey Williams 21:44

And we struggled with that as a committee at the beginning, because many people on the committee said, "Why on earth would I want to speak that language?" Or, "Why would I want to sing that song in that language"? And when we actually approached some other people out there that are into international hymnody, the answers that came back to us were all about solidarity. It was all about when you choose to struggle with the actual pronunciation of those words, then you are standing shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with your brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world. You are living their struggle, in some ways, with them. You are saying, "Together in Christ, we can actually move forward." And so, it was, it was a beautiful, I think, a beautiful way to represent that through this book.

Carla Long 22:37

Truly, that is awesome. Thank you for sharing that. I, I appreciate hearing that. So, I was wondering, we've been talking a lot about the hymnal. Do you have a favorite hymn out of the 664 hymns that made it in?

Joey Williams 22:53

Oh, my gosh, a really good question, Carla.

Carla Long 23:00

There's only 664 to choose from, my gosh.

Joey Williams 23:03

There are just so many examples of great hymns in here. It's funny, I have, actually, like a document that I keep that is like a list of songs that are often overlooked...

Carla Long 23:16

Oh.

Joey Williams 23:17

...because, because, so, you know, with all of these new songs that came out in this new hymnal, people are going to find their favorites. In fact, research shows us that people, like a normal congregation, will probably only learn a quarter of the songs in any hymn book that they sing out of.

Carla Long 23:34

Oh, wow.

Joey Williams 23:35

So, they won't use 75% of it. They'll only use about a quarter of the songs that are in there over the course of being a congregation. Isn't that crazy of using that book?

Carla Long 23:44

That is crazy. Although you know, when I was growing up, my home congregation made a point to every week have a learning hymn. And so, we actually learned, I think we learned a lot more of the *Hymns of the Saints* than maybe perhaps other congregations did, because we found some favorite, favorites in there, you know, of those learning hymns that we forced ourselves to sing, even though it's uncomfortable, and it sounded pretty bad at first. So that was really, that's actually a really good idea, it sounds like, to have learning hymns.

Joey Williams 24:13

Yeah, I'll give you an example. So, one of the most popular and most beautiful songs that we have in this book is *For Everyone Born*, which we probably sung already, what, a million times?

Carla Long 24:25

At least.

Joey Williams 24:26

At least. Yeah. And it's an incredible song.

Carla Long 24:30

It's incredible.

Joey Williams 24:31

Really, it probably gets right to the heart of the type of people of justice and peace that we want to be. But if you turn the page, and I can't tell you how many congregations I've been to that have never turned the page to look at number 286, which is called *Let Justice Flow Down*. And I'll just read some of the words. "Let justice flow down, down like a river, down to the valleys where the helpless cry. Righteousness flow through us forever, lead us to the stream that will never run dry. Flow to the mouths of the hungry. Flow to the hands of the poor. Flow to the hearts of the orphans, the ravages of war."

Carla Long 25:14

Wow.

Joey Williams 25:15

It goes on, and it talks about getting into our nation's, into the streets with the homeless, with other people, even in to the cells of the prisoners. And that, to me, is just as beautiful as 285, but a lot of people miss it because we get stuck on our favorite hymns.

Carla Long 25:34

Right? Yeah, that's pretty, those are really powerful words. And, and what is a little daunting is that when you're singing these words, you, you know, you might come to a realization that, gosh, this is, this is what I'm singing. This is the way I should be living my life. And so, when you sing your theology, you got to actually look at the words and think about the words and do what the words say. So that's pretty intense, actually.

Joey Williams 26:02

Yeah, yeah, we sing ourselves into being. So, we basically sing the type of people that we want to become.

Carla Long 26:12

That's not easy, especially when there's words like "flow to the streets of the homeless, finding no place they can go. Flow to the cells of the prisoners who face each day alone." Oh.

Joey Williams 26:23

So, you know, when this, you know when this song became important for me?

Carla Long 26:28

When?

Joey Williams 26:28

I always liked it, but I had this opportunity to go to Jamaica with the president of the church, Steve Veazey, and I was there to do music. And we one day go up and up and up and up into the mountains, and when we get up there, there's this church that has been built up in the mountains, and our pastor lives there, and it's this lady, and she's this incredible lady who basically always keeps her doors open to the people in her neighborhood. And we sang this song, and the people just really got into it. And then, as we were leaving, what I realized is here we were up on top of this mountain, where everyone goes after their long day of work down in the valleys, and life is not easy for a lot of people in Jamaica, and this, this pastor, she just spent the whole afternoon telling us about lots of the people in their congregation, and the struggles that they go through. And so, it was so crazy, that we were up on top of this mountain, singing this song, *Let Justice Flowed Down*, as though she and her little congregation that she created there became that source of that justice flowing down into the valley of people's every day routine and life. And at, only at night, do they get to escape back up into the mountains. It was pretty, pretty powerful for me.

Carla Long 28:04

That is a powerful moment. You know in Jamaica, where everybody thinks, oh, it's all beautiful all the time, and it's touristy and blah, blah, blah, but there's some real justice issues there in Jamaica, aren't there? There's some real poverty up in the mountains.

Joey Williams 28:17

There are. And it was already amazing to see this strong, woman pastor who has decided, I am going to shepherd these people. It's just amazing to watch the strength and the power and the authority she holds in the Spirit, I think. She has this amazing ability to just capture these people, and it's because she loves them. It's because she has decided to completely invest her life. She built that church specifically in a place that the rest of the people of her village had to walk by it on their way down into the valley, and so, they could not miss passing by that church, that place that she was opening as a welcoming refuge for people looking for some type of inner strength and healing.

Carla Long 29:05

Oh, that's a beautiful story. Thank you for sharing that.

Joey Williams 29:09

Yeah, no problem.

Carla Long 29:10

Speaking of beautiful stories, I know that you have quite a few more when you helped to record the audio for the hymnal. So, we have this amazing hymnal, 664 incredible hymns, and then, like a lot of them's internationals, right? So, us Americans who live in Kansas, we might not know how to speak Chichewa. Is that the right word? Is that one of them?

Joey Williams 29:33

Yeah, Chichewa, from Malawi.

Carla Long 29:35

Chichewa. Right. So, we might not know how to speak that. So, you went around and recorded audio to help people like me learn how to say some of the words, right?

Joey Williams 29:44

Yeah. So, as we were figuring out how we were going to put some of these international songs together, we decided to make a couple decisions. One of those decisions was if we had something in an original language, let's say Chichewa, and we decided that we were not going to translate it, then the song had to be easy enough that we would just simply sing it in that language, in the original language. The way we got that, that song in Chichewa, which is called *Fanana*, we have one song in Chichewa, is that someone who had been to, to Malawi, called us on the phone, and she basically just sang it. She was like, "Oh, my gosh. I heard this song in Malawi. It's amazing. It's called *Fanana*. You guys have to put it into hymnal." And she sang it over the phone. And somebody noted the words and wrote down the notes, and the words to the song, just over the phone.

Carla Long 30:45

Oh, wow.

Joey Williams 30:46

So, that's, that's how we got. Yeah, that's how we got that song. The way we got most...

Carla Long 30:49

It's a real organic process. My goodness.

Joey Williams 30:51

Oh, oh, yeah. The way we got most of our songs is we, we actually gave all of the apostles, the twelve apostles, so we bought 12 different recorders, and we said, "When you're out in your ministry, over the next year or two," and this was at the beginning of that five-year process, "when you're out doing your ministry, we want you to just turn this on when people are singing, and begin to record the songs that they're singing. We also want you to ask the question, 'What is your heart song? If there was one song that you would teach the church, what would it be?'" So that's how we got these, most of these international selections, that you'll find in the hymnal. So that *Fanana* song came like that. And then, we realized, oh, my gosh, it would be, you know, we've been so respectful of these different cultures, it would not be now, it would not be respectful now if, let's say, Joey put a choir together in Independence, Missouri, and we all just start singing *Fanana*. You know, you might get away with that for like one song, but we were starting to look at around 70 songs we wanted to have the original language recorded. And so, we had a real dilemma, because while we had a nice budget that had been kind of prepared for the last 30 years, of a lot of people who had contributed to an endowment fund, so that we could have a new hymnal someday, we didn't have all the budget in the world to go all over the world and do these recordings.

Carla Long 32:18

Yeah, just 70 different locations. No big deal.

Joey Williams 32:21

Yeah, exactly. And so, we had to make some real decisions of where would we go and do some of these recordings? And so, we went to two different locations in Africa, for example. We went to Congo and we went to Zambia to do the different recordings, but we brought people in from Mozambique, from Kenya, and maybe some other places to be a part of those recordings with us.

Carla Long 32:48

So, you traveled to two places in Africa, at least, to record some of these songs.

Joey Williams 32:54

Yeah, the different places that, I mean, I was, I can't tell you, like I love to travel, but I cannot tell you the, how unexpected it was that part of my job for basically two years would be go around the world and capture some of these songs. So, I got to go to Australia, the Congo, French Polynesia in Tahiti. I went to Haiti where we got some beautiful recordings. We had people send in recordings from India and Korea. I was able to get to Malawi and do some recordings there. We had a choir that we put together, two choirs that we put together for some recordings in the United States. We had our First People's group from, a local group come in and do two of the songs that are in the hymnal. We had different leaders come from Latin America that came in and sang most of our Spanish songs. Did I say Zambia? I'm not sure if I said Zambia. And then we had one song that I'm sure you've seen the video, and a lot

of people might have seen the video, but it's *Peace, Salaam, Shalom*, is the song that we're singing. And the video is called *Peace Through All People*.

Carla Long 34:15

And it's a video of people from all over the world singing this song together, right?

Joey Williams 34:20

Yeah. So, on our very first trip, as I was in the plane, I came up with like seven projects of things I'd like to see happen because I kind of knew that I would be going to different places. And one of the things was, I thought, man, I'd love to have a song that we kind of do one of those montages where we go and we have people sing kind of the same thing all over the world, and then you, you shoot that with video and you, you get to see people from all over the world singing together. And I thought this has to be an easy song. It has to be a song that represents really who we are, which we're a peace church and so *Peace, Salaam, Shalom* became that song.

Carla Long 34:59

Oh, that was such a wonderful video. I remember when it was shown at World Conference and it, you know how there's always that buzz in the conference chamber, of people talking because we just can't stop talking, and the second it came on, it was just silence. People were so into it because it was so beautiful. And you got to see, we got to see, our brothers and sisters from all over the world singing the same song that is so meaningful to us. So that was just a really wonderful video. You guys did such a great job on that.

Joey Williams 35:27

Right. That was, it was a great moment too. What's funny is that was the first time we had shown that video. And of course, we were working day and night on that project to get that done, so that it could be shown at World Conference. And I remember, like it was the first time I had seen it, and so, basically, this was a video log of the last two years of my life, going around and meeting different people, and all of these amazing members of the Church and friends of the Church who had come together to make this hymnal what it is today. It is really beautiful kind of homage to who we are in Community of Christ.

Carla Long 36:05

Did you get a little teary when you saw it?

Joey Williams 36:08

No, not at all, Carla. I don't...

Carla Long 36:10

I don't believe you. So, in all of your travel for the hymnal and recording these awesome songs, this, these audios, what, like what was, you know, tell me a favorite story? Tell me something that you remember happening that, that was fun.

Joey Williams 36:26

Oh, gosh. So, I think one of my most memorable things that happened was the difference of going to Congo and going to Zambia. So, we arrived in the Congo and when we got out of that plane, we, it was just crazy. I mean, people were wanting to grab our bags. There were people all over. They were trying to, just, it was just absolutely insane. The, that country has been in conflict for many years. There's still conflict going on, and you could feel the tenseness of that. Now I had been to the Congo before, so I was expecting that, but Bryce Veazey, who was doing the video with me and was there to do the recording and the video recording, he, it was just freaking him out, but it was also making me a little nervous of what was going on. But you can just feel that tenseness. Everything was a mess. Nothing was in order. When we got to even the congregation, nothing seemed to have been organized. I had sent ahead like 12 songs that I wanted them to put choirs together to prepare these songs, and come and perform them and sing them, and nothing had been prepared. And so, I only had nine days to record 12 songs with this group of people and I had to run around and just find people to be in a choir. I had to put a choir together. I had to teach all the music and get all of these songs recorded in that time. I was absolutely exhausted. I'd almost lost my voice by the end of those nine days, and it was just, it was just crazy. So, then we go to the border, and again, once again, there we are at the border with all these people trying to grab our things as we're going from Congo into Zambia, and all of a sudden, when we arrive in Zambia, a country that's been at peace for a much longer time, you could just feel the difference. All of the sudden there was no one trying to grab our things. People were calm and talking to us in a much better way. When we showed up at the church, the choir had already been there for seven days, kind of had a youth retreat, it was this youth choir, a young adult choir, and they had just had this young adult retreat for seven days. They sang every single song that we had asked them to prepare. They also had 12 songs there and they gave a concert that night of all of the songs that I had sent them and like, totally different world. And you can just see how when a place has more peace, just how life can be. You see possibilities of a different type of future.

Carla Long 39:21

Oh, gosh, what a story.

Joey Williams 39:25

Yeah. It was incredible.

Carla Long 39:25

But you still, you still got some pretty good songs out of both places, right?

Joey Williams 39:29

I did. I mean, and that, and that's, the thing is, it's so funny because when you listen to the recordings, you will hear just this raw sound that comes out of the Congo, you know, because that's what I had put together. I just kind of put together this raw group and so you had some amazing songs like "Ameni, ameni, amen, amen, ameni."

Carla Long 39:56

Do you wish you hadn't started that quite so high?

Joey Williams 39:56

[inaudible] ...a little bit, yeah.

Carla Long 40:01

No, I love that song. Sorry to interrupt. Go ahead.

Joey Williams 40:03

No, but you have songs like that. And then I think we captured one of the best voices that is in any of the songs in *Kanisa Litajengwa*. And there was this family, actually the boy who begins singing in the *Peace, Salaam, Shalom* song and video, that boy is Fabreith, and he is amazing, and so I had heard him before, and so I knew I wanted to use him for that video. And then when I got back, I invited him, his brother, and his sister, to come and be a part of the choir that I had put together. And what was really interesting is that they came from kind of the not-so-elite congregation, one of the not-so-elite congregations of Lubumbashi, Congo. And so, when I was going around and trying to figure out who would sing the solo on *Kanisa Litajengwa*, this girl was just amazing. And I said, "You're singing the solo." And the choir director that I had found to kind of help me lead this group pulls me off to the side and is like, "You can't use her." And I'm like, "What do you mean, I can't use her?" And he's like, you know, he was just trying to be nice, but he was like, basically trying to tell me, because she came from one of the poorer neighborhoods, and she would not represent the mission center well if she were the person selected to be the soloist for the song. And I'm like, are you kidding me? Like, the song *Kanisa Litajengwa* is about who is going to build the church. And I'm like, "You know who's going to build the church? This girl. This girl who might, yes, come from a place where nobody has shoes and there's a waste dump right behind the church, but we're going to use this girl because that is who we're gonna build the church with.

Carla Long 41:50

Like, for me now, that song is that voice. You know, when I think about that song, I think about her voice because it is just, you're right, it is just so perfect for it. She's, she's got it.

Joey Williams 42:03

Yeah, there were a couple of moments like that song. Another song is *Takwaba*.

Carla Long 42:08

Takwaba uwabanga *Yesu!*

Joey Williams 42:10

Where you just, and again, you can feel the rawness. That was from the Congo too. And you can just feel, you get a sense of the essence of who these people are, and who we are as Community of Christ when you listen to some of these original recording.

Carla Long 42:29

Wow, what a, what a gift you have gotten to get to go around to these places and see those. It's definitely a lot of work. I know that you worked really hard at it, but what a gift you have been given.

Joey Williams 42:42

Oh, totally. I, it was so funny, because you know how in life you get through different stages, and you're like, okay, how am I going to define my life, the next stage of my life? I never would have expected that this was where my life would have taken me, even though, you know, I have a, I have a master's in music, like I have degrees in music. That's, that's my background. That's what I was kind of meant to do. I just never expected that it would look like this. And yet, I couldn't be more pleased with the opportunity that was given to me.

Carla Long 43:17

Well, actually, and people who know you, Joey, and listen to this would be like, well, you really were the perfect person. A) you've already traveled a zillion places and you know a ton of people, and B) you know a ton of languages, and C) you're really good at music. I mean, I remember a time when you and I were sitting on the Madrid Metro and I started singing a song, and you started harmonizing, and people started giving us money. I mean, that's just what happens when people are around you. You know, like things just happen and things start to move. So, I think that you're just the perfect person to do it. And I think the final product was, has just been so fantastic. I have, I have played and used these, those audio recordings in more places than I can probably name because I think that they're so indicative of who we are as Community of Christ. And it's so cool that Community of Christ people are the ones singing them.

Joey Williams 44:03

Yeah, I think you're right. I think that was just incredible. Like to get to know even better some of these people from around the world and to hear their stories. I can no longer listen to these songs or look at this book, even, without thinking of all of the people and all of the stories that have gone into that. And that again, is about what it means to be a prophetic people. It's like all of these voices have a voice in shaping who God is calling us to be.

Carla Long 44:37

Yeah. I was wondering if you wouldn't mind talking about *Tiona Nehenehe*. Is that how you say it? I think it is.

Joey Williams 44:45

Yeah.

Carla Long 44:46

Um, I remember you talking about this one time when we were in Europe together, and I just loved this story and I loved hearing about it, and we haven't talked too much about French Polynesia, but they have such a history of singing and they're, they're said wonderful singers. And so, could you talk a little bit more about that particular hymn?

Joey Williams 45:05

Yeah. So, when I was in college, I went to, to Tahiti and I did three months there. I kind of did a semester abroad where I was, my point was to try to begin learning some French. And I had learned the word "nehenehe" while I was there, because it means beautiful or pretty. And so...

Carla Long 45:24

Wait, wait. Do people call you that. Is that why?

Joey Williams 45:26

Oh yeah, I get that a lot, Carla. I knew how to say like, “you are pretty”, which is “ooa nehenehe.”

Carla Long 45:34

Oh, I see where this is going.

Joey Williams 45:37

Yeah, so I knew that word. But when I would go to different places, and we would have different events throughout the time that I was there, a song that constantly gets sung is *Tiona Nehenehe*, which is Zion, the beautiful. And so, as I listened to this song, this song, when you're there, just begins to become a part of who you are. And it's even a song that's being sung kind of all over the world now, It's funny because it's probably one of the longest, most difficult songs, that we have to sing, that's in its original language. But yet, the Tahitian culture, as you know, Carla, and I don't know if our listeners know, but the French Polynesian culture is such an important part of the history of Community of Christ. The French Polynesians have been a part of our movement since the earliest days of our movement. And so, this song says Zion, the beautiful and it's like this longing of going and being with the saints, in Zion, in Tiona. And originally, I can just picture when you're listening to that song, you can just hear kind of the ocean, as you're listening to the song. And you can picture just all of these people along the beach, facing Zion, which for them at the time was Independence, Missouri, facing Zion, longing and wishing to one day be in Zion. And so, in today's world, we think that's kind of crazy, because our concept of Zion has changed a lot. And what's interesting is that one of our president-prophets went to Tahiti, and when he stepped foot on the shores, he basically gave a revelation right there. And he said, “Zion is here.” And so, it was one of the first revelations that allowed us to begin to open our thinking of Zion not just being in Independence, Missouri, but Zion being the places that we create, wherever we are.

Carla Long 47:56

Sometimes I face Tahiti and sing *Tiona Nehenehe*, because, man, I feel like that's Zion right there for sure.

Joey Williams 48:05

It's so beautiful, isn't it?

Carla Long 48:06

It's so beautiful, and the food is so delicious. Well, we got back to food? Thank goodness.

Joey Williams 48:13

Well, and the people there, they embody Community of Christ. You know, they, their choirs are so well known that, like the president, basically, of Tahiti, or the senators and people, the officials, will call our church and they will say, “Will you welcome these visitors, these ambassadors and people that come to

Tahiti?" because they know that hospitality is such an important part of who we have become as Community of Christ in French Polynesia.

Carla Long 48:43

So, wait a second. The, the President, or whoever, of Tahiti, will call...

Joey Williams 48:47

Yeah.

Carla Long 48:47

...members of Community of Christ and say, will you go to the airport and meet this diplomat or whoever's coming, this important person that's coming, and welcome this important person?

Joey Williams 48:59

Oh, yeah. We have, our members there are like, very important parts. We have political party members that are Community of Christ members. We have people on TV that are broadcasters and anchors. We have people that are in charge of the post office. Community of Christ is all throughout French Polynesia and a huge part of the culture of French Polynesia.

Carla Long 49:22

That's amazing. So, when, like, a diplomat comes to the airport, what, what do the members do? How do they welcome them?

Joey Williams 49:29

They'll put together a choir, and they might have one guitar or one ukulele, or they might have five, and these people will come and they will start singing all of this music whenever you walk out, and you're dead tired because you arrived there at like 5am in the morning.

Carla Long 49:46

Right.

Joey Williams 49:47

And you're, all the sudden, you're like pleasantly surprised, and you hear this music and you walk out and you realize it's for you. And then they start walking up to you and they lay these shell leis on you, or it might be flowers, and they begin to just bombard you with welcoming kisses and hugs and welcoming you to their island.

Carla Long 50:08

Oh, well, the flowers are always nice, because after that long flight, you do smell just a little bit. So, I'm sure the flowers are, you know, there for a reason.

Joey Williams 50:17

Yeah, it's probably for the smells. I've seen pictures of you, Carla, with lots of flowers.

Carla Long 50:24

Well, I had been on the plane for a long time, okay? So there's one other hymn that I kind of want you to talk about, if you don't mind. I want to talk about number 337, *Somos el cuerpo de Cristo*, and this is a really interesting hymn. I don't know if it's the only hymn in our hymnal that's like this, but in this hymn, you have to sing it in English and in Spanish. There's no, like, only English or only Spanish. You have to sing it in both of the languages. Is that the only hymn in the whole hymnal where you have to do that?

Joey Williams 50:58

Well, other than like, *Peace, Salaam, Shalom*, where you have to say one word...

Carla Long 51:02

Right.

Joey Williams 51:02

...in three different languages.

Carla Long 51:04

Oh, sure.

Joey Williams 51:05

Yeah. But, yes, this would be an example of kind of a long hymn. It's an actual, you know, it's actually, it says three verses, but you could even consider it six verses, basically. It goes back up to the top. But yeah, it's one, it's the only hymn where you're singing a line "Somos el cuerpo de Cristo", and then you say it in English, "We are the body of Christ." And then you go back into Spanish, and then you go back to English. And it just continues to go back and forth with that. And we found this, when we found this song, and it was presented to us, it was just amazing. Like, we loved it. We were scared of it. We were like, is it too soon to put in a song that's basically a bilingual song? And actually, most of our congregations in, kind of, in Spanish speaking places, they have that bilingual ability. Like they, they just do that all the time. And I find that, at least to sing the first part, that almost any congregation can accomplish singing the first part of this. The second page is a little difficult. So, if your congregation can't sing Spanish, or there's no one to be able to sing Spanish for you, then you could just stick with the first page. But this has been a great opportunity for congregations to really reach out beyond themselves, try to understand what it's like for people who come to this country who might not be able to speak both languages perfectly. And so, when we struggle with the Spanish then we understand what it's like to come here and struggle with English.

Carla Long 52:38

Oh, definitely. Like it really gives you compassion for people who, well, yeah, who like you said, for people who come here and just really have to like, be, they have to jump in to English all the time. And I know my husband, who's from Ukraine, when he first came here, he, his English is very good, but he's still got really bad headaches because of the language. You have to work all the time to try and understand what people are saying. And English speakers speak really fast like I do, and it's just very

difficult. So, if nothing else, number 337, *Somos el cuerpo de Cristo* gives people maybe some compassion for other people. I like it.

Joey Williams 53:17

Absolutely. And again, what could be a better song with the words that talk about who we are? We are the body of Christ. We've answered "yes" to the call of the Lord. We bring the good news to the world.

Carla Long 53:31

Yeah. And just knowing that you could be singing along with your brothers and sisters in South and Central America and in Spain and other Spanish speaking places in the world, it, it, if you really think that through, it means something really important and really special, I think.

Joey Williams 53:49

Yeah, what does it mean? It really challenges us to reach *[inaudible]* of a congregation are we building? What does it mean to become the body of Christ?

Carla Long 54:01

Right? Well, maybe that will have to be on a different podcast to answer that question. So, Joey, you, you kind of answered your favorite hymn in number 286, the one about justice, but since we've been talking, has there been another hymn that's kind of popped out to you that you specifically, super-duper love?

Joey Williams 54:24

Oh, gosh. That is so hard to do that.

Carla Long 54:30

Well, especially for someone who loves words and who loves music?

Joey Williams 54:33

Yeah, let me just like for people that have a book around them, I'm just going to name a couple that you can't miss. Number 5, *Bring Many Names*. *[inaudible]* The metaphors for God are almost limitless. That song just is perfect for that. 212, *God Weeps*. This idea that our God is a, is a God that weeps with us, that God understands our pain and our struggles. It reminds me of, even in the *Book of Mormon*, where Enoch sees through the eyes of God. I mean, how amazing is that, of this idea that God is weeping with God's people. 273, *Draw the Circle Wide*. This is who we are. We continue to be more and more inclusive in Community of Christ. 277, man, I love the song, *Welcome, Jesus, You are Welcome*. And then it goes through all of these ideas that we might not think of every day of who Jesus is to us. Jesus can be found in those people on the street. It reminds me of Mother Teresa, and the idea that Jesus is found on the street as she was walking through the streets of Calcutta. *Let Justice Flow Down*, 286. I told you 366, it is the, it's my Community of Christ flagship song. *As God is Joy* was written by two Community of Christ members. 526, *Is There One Who Feels Unworthy?* that was actually written by youth at a Community of Christ IYF, an International Youth Forum, with Ken Medema. 581, *I'm Going to Live So God Can Use Me*. It's just a great song, fun to sing. And one of my absolute favorites is one of

the almost last songs in the hymnal, number 663, "I wish God's love to be with you, no matter where you go.

Carla Long 56:37

Oh, I wish God's love to be with you too, friend. Oh, and that one's in Chinese and Tamil?

Joey Williams 56:46

Tamil, yeah.

Carla Long 56:47

Yeah. Oh my gosh, what a beautiful language.

Joey Williams 56:50

So that was one of the only exceptions where we didn't put French and Spanish with it. But we went ahead and, because the song was in Tamil and Chinese so we put those in there.

Carla Long 57:02

And it's really nice that you put in the phonetic, the phonetics from the Chinese and the Tamil because otherwise they may never try, people may never try to sing it, which is really helpful.

Joey Williams 57:11

It's helpful. Yeah, it's helpful.

Carla Long 57:13

It's very helpful because my Chinese is a little rusty. Well, Joey...

Joey Williams 57:20

I'm sure your food Chinese, your food Chinese is probably fine.

Carla Long 57:24

It that, that is on point, my friend. Don't worry about that. Oh, gosh, Joey, thank you so much for being on the podcast. It has been wonderful to hear more about this exciting and cool project, because I know the people here in Salt Lake City are still just in awe of the hymnal. And when we have a visitor to the Salt Lake congregation, almost inevitably, that visitor will be like, "Do you have a hymnal I can take with me?" Because it is just so exciting to them to see so many different types of songs and words that don't always have gender specific words for God, and so on and so forth. So, it's been a really, actually, it's been a really good missionary tool for us.

Joey Williams 58:08

Yeah, I can imagine. For us it has been too. It's amazing, just even the people in Europe who speak English, to be able to send this book to them has just been incredible. It's been one of our best witnessing tools.

Carla Long 58:21

Well, I mean, 'cuz you're right, because when we, what did you say earlier? I said something about how we sing our theology. And...

Joey Williams 58:29

We sing ourselves into being.

Carla Long 58:31

We sing ourselves into being. Yeah, and sometimes...yeah, go ahead.

Joey Williams 58:34

There's a song, there's a song that that's called, *We Sing a New World into Being* and it's a great, another great IMMB song.

Carla Long 58:45

Yeah, well, because, like I said earlier, when you sing these words, and if you actually pay attention to what you're listening to, then you might think something like, oh my gosh, is that what we believe? Then I really need to get on the ball. I need to...

Joey Williams 58:57

Exactly.

Carla Long 58:57

...I need to get out there and start working with people who are Jesus, all over, all around me. So that's a really cool thing, too.

Joey Williams 59:07

Yep.

Carla Long 59:07

Well, I appreciate your wisdom and your knowledge and taking the time out to talk to us. So, thanks so much, Joey, for being on the podcast.

Joey Williams 59:15

You're welcome. It's been a pleasure.

Josh Mangelson 59:34

The views expressed in this episode are of those speaking, and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Latter-day Seekers team, or of Community of Christ. The music has been provided by Ben Harrington you can find his music at Mormon guitar.com