

Coffee Connect | God Moments

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SPEAKERS

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Welcome to this episode of Coffee Connect, a podcast about the mighty power of story to engage, inspire, form and send a faith movement of disciples to make a difference in the world. My name is Linda booth. I'm still a full-time disciple of Jesus Christ, even though I retired in 2019, after serving over 20 years as an apostle in Community of Christ.

Let me tell you a story about a God moment. It's Elizabeth's story, and it's told just recently. And, she says that before sharing her experience with the Chattanooga Community of Christ, she says I need to share a connection with this church with you. My half-brother, Elizabeth wrote, Christian, was the first person to walk into the doors of this ministry. When it first started. The church had just purchased the old bank building to be the church for this area, and Pastor Terry Williams pastor at the time of the purchase, and Mr. Jimmy had the door wide open and were inside putting up a basketball goal. Christian walked in to see what was happening, and Pastor Terry told him they were starting to church and invited him to come. Christian became involved in the church. He and Mr. Jimmy's son Jared grew up together and play basketball together. My brother told me Jared was called white chocolate because of his basketball skills. Many years later, that original building has one of the most beautiful murals painted on the outside wall. 1000s of cars passed by each day. This building is now the Children's Peace Center, a ministry of Community of Christ and the church's Celebration Center is my store. My brother Christian no longer lives in this neighborhood. He's a father, a husband, professional drummer and a graphic artist. And Pastor Terry is now pastor of the Hot Springs, Arkansas Community of Christ. And Mr. Jimmy's son, Jared is now lead pastor of the ministries here. My brother and I did not live together when we were growing up. I grew up in Alabama, and he lived in East Chattanooga. Our relationship didn't happen until we were adults. We are close now and talk they like now my sharing time, with children playing all around us. My husband was murdered in our yard during my child's birthday party. My husband's killers are still unknown. For weeks after his murder, my children and I received death threats. This tragedy messed me up bad. I developed an anxiety disorder called Agoraphobia, causing me to have an extreme fear of leaving my home. As a single parent, my anxiety add to my two small children's struggles. I am a Cardiovascular Technician. With seven years of experience working for a Catholic hospital. My employer has allowed me to be on a sabbatical leave because I'm afraid to leave my home. Because I'm unable to work. I'm concerned about how long I can provide for my children. I am in therapy provided free of charge by the hospital. My therapist is an excellent compassionate counselor. But I found myself falling deeper into depression. The chaplains from the hospital have visited and prayed with me several times. And my brother Christian constantly

encouraged me to get closer to God. In a moment of desperation, I asked him to put me in contact with one of the ministers who he works for as a drummer in their church band. He said no. Instead, he wanted me to contact the church of his youth, Chattanooga Community of Christ. He insisted I needed to do the contacting myself. Well, I put it off and I put it off. And I'm ashamed to tell you this. But I also started cutting myself. I was so concerned by this additional emotional disorder that I texted the number of the minister my brother gave me immediately I got a response asking if he could call me later as he was driving. I couldn't wait for him to call. I called him. This call was not answered by one minister but by four through a speakerphone I spoke with Pastor Edrick, Miss Nancy, Pastor Jared and Mr. Jimmy, who was my original contact. I didn't mention my brother There are my issues. I just said I wanted to visit with the minister sometime real soon. "Can we come now?" said Pastor Edrick, I explained I lived 56 miles away and knew coming now was asking too much of them. They said it was Wings Wednesday, and the drive would help them find a new place to eat wings. After agreeing for them to come, I had a panic attack. I was crying, I was shaking. I was I was all upset. And when I calmed down, I made the decision to not let them in the house. I would talk with them through an open window. Plans changed the minute they arrived. Edrick saw me through my partially open window. He made the introductions and ask if it was okay, if they went and said a prayer of blessing in my yard. I told them, I would not be joining them. But I did want them to bless my yard. My boys and I stood on the sofa to look outside. The four ministers to praying just a few inches away from where my husband died 19 months earlier. My six year old son Rodney clapped his hands and said, this was good. And I said, "Yes, this is very good." They walk completely around the house, stopping on each side to pray a prayer of blessing. I assume Christian must have told them about me and to expect my call. I sent him a text asking him if I was right. And he responded, what and who are you talking about? I realized this was a God moment. So I invited them into our house. I told them I wasn't comfortable with touching and we'd be sitting on the floor. I might get up and walk around while we visited. My plans got changed again. One of them said God wanted them to pray for me and my children. If I was okay with that. And I said yes. And asked when and they said "now!" Jared and Edrick sat on the floor with my sons ages six and nine and explained a sacrament called laying on of hands for those needing a boost. Nancy and Jared anointed my sons with holy oil and said prayers. My youngest smiled the entire time and then shouted Amen that was great!" My nine year old who was having the birthday party when my husband was murdered, sat very still and said, "Thank you." You need to understand. He never says thank you. When it was my turn, I again said please don't touch me. Jude, my nine year old asked if he and his brother could touch me. I said of course. Jude immediately turned to Pastor Jared saying we will be God's hands. Holy fire. I knew God was real with and with me. Miss Nancy and Pastor Jared stood next to me as I sat on the floor. My two little boys quietly and solemnly rested their little boy hands on my head. The moment their hands came off my head. My son said the most freeing five words I had heard in the last one and a half years. Jude said "we are safely blessed now!" This was my introduction to Community of Christ. I knew it wouldn't be right if I didn't share this with others. I've been sharing it with anyone who will listen. We spent another three hours together on that Wings Wednesday. They listen to my story. They heard all my challenges. These are probably the busiest people I know. But they always find time for me. I go to church now. It's in my living room on the second and third Friday mornings each month. The Community of Christ brings church to me and my sons. I fully understand why Christian insisted I contact the church of his youth. Last Thanksgiving Day I went for the first time to Golden Corral for brunch with my boys and a coworker and her family. We also played disc golf. It was my first full day outside my home since my husband's graveside service. Therapy is helping me. I

can now drive short trips to the boys schools. I'm better but not well yet. I do small goals and then go bigger. My therapist has given a name for my wholeness goals. I'm terrified and paralyzed to courageous and hyper. I have two extremely important goals. One is to return to work part time on May 15. My second goal is to attend Easter celebration at our church on Glass Street and possibly get baptized with Jude. If this happens, I promised to have pastor Edward post pictures of our baptism. Thank you, everyone for making it possible for Community of Christ. You know those ministers taking the time to come in the midst of my fear. That was a God moment.

My friends in Coffee Connect. There are a lot of God moments. And God moments often occur when you and I are willing to enter into the messiness of other people's lives, to bring that blessing of hope. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, connect them to a God who loves them unconditionally and calls them Home.