Say What | World Conference Resolution G1 | Spencer Greenhalgh

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Faith, Latter Day Saints, Community of Christ, Creative Commons license

SPEAKERS

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam, Spencer Greenhalgh, Cassie Ripsam

Cassie Ripsam 00:27
Welcome to "Say What?" We are really excited to have you here today. We're interviewing Mr. Spencer Greenhalgh. He wrote the G-1 Resolution and [MA: World Conference] for World Conference, yes. And first, we have several getting to know you questions that we ask every person we interview.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 00:46
Mr. Spencer, would you survive a zombie apocalypse?

Spencer Greenhalgh 00:52
My short answer is, I hope so. But I think I have some work to do. To get more specific. One of my favorite authors is a guy named Corey Doctorow, and he once wrote a post=apocalyptic story that was all about the need for humans to come together and cooperate instead of be selfish and go in on their own. And I think that's the secret, right? Whether it's a zombie apocalypse or some other kind, I really agree with that idea that we have to put our selfishness aside and have faith in each other. The thing, though, is that I'm not great at that in pre-apocalyptic situations, so I have some practice I need to do if I see zombies on the horizon.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:33
But like, what you're saying is, like, you know how Native Americans would, if someone didn't have something their neighbors, that their neighbor had that thing that they needed, they would give it to them. So like this, would you say just have faith in humanity?

Spencer Greenhalgh 01:47
I think so, yeah. And I don't know that particular history, but that sounds like a darn good philosophy to me. Yeah.

Cassie Ripsam 01:54
So I talk to inanimate objects often. Like, I'll talk to, I'll apologize to the chair I bumped into, or I'll talk to the universe. Do you ever do that? Like, do you talk to inanimate objects?

Spencer Greenhalgh 02:06

I caught myself doing that this morning. Actually, I talk to computers when I am frustrated with them.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 02:12
Yes, yes. Okay, so what part of a driver's test do you think you would most likely fail or perform poorly at if you don't fail?

Spencer Greenhalgh 02:24
Parallel parking ... 100%.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 02:27
Yes, thankfully, living in Florida, we have, living in a smaller town, we don't have that many parallel parking now. If you go downtown, it's 100% parallel parking. I think I would fail as well.

Cassie Ripsam 02:45
And this one was made up by our little sister. What is the weirdest dream you've ever had?

Spencer Greenhalgh 02:52
So I do not remember my dreams easily, and so you provided this question ahead of time, and so I took a few minutes last night, and I went through a journaling app that I used, to see did I write anything down about dreams? And I had even forgotten that I had written about some of these. But even though I work as a college professor, I've had several dreams where they found out I was a fraud and I needed to go back to school and like graduate college, somehow I had gotten hired as a professor without even a degree, so apparently I have some anxieties about my qualifications to do my job.

Cassie Ripsam 03:29
Apparently, wow, like you don't even know if you're a fraud or not, like that's weird.

Spencer Greenhalgh 03:36
Well, the funniest part about the dream is I knew in the dream, right, that I had the degree necessary, but I've had multiple dreams, according to my journaling app, which has not steered me wrong in the past, where I suddenly realized I needed to go back to school to keep my job.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:51
Wow. Okay, so you sent us a really great bio. We have several questions about that information.

Spencer Greenhalgh 03:59
Excellent.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 04:00
You wrote that you are quite the nerd. In what ways are you a nerd?

Spencer Greenhalgh 04:05
So, I am a nerd, in that I have interests that are outside of the mainstream, that even loving family members will give me a hard time about. So, people listening to this won't be able to tell, but as we're

recording, I've got a bunch of train magnets in my office. I like trains a whole lot more than most Americans do. When it comes to music, then I have a hard time recognizing, like famous musical artists. I just don't follow that a whole lot. My musical tastes tend to lean towards, I don't know, just kind of obscure and goofy bands that sort of thing.

Cassie Ripsam 04:44
I also see a Star Wars picture, like those x wings behind you.

Spencer Greenhalgh 04:48
We've got, yeah, I've got x wings behind me. I've got x wings in front of me that you can't see. There's a lot of Star Wars stuff in this office.

Cassie Ripsam 04:55
I also was reading your, um, your website thing, and saw a whole lot of Greek mythology references. I love Greek mythology too.

Spencer Greenhalgh 05:05
The Greek mythology, I have to give more credit to my daughter. She is super into mythologies of all kinds right now, and it's been a lot of fun to sort of catch up on things that I haven't really studied since I was her age. Yeah.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 05:19
So super important question. Our relationship hangs in the balance. Okay, [okay] Marvel or DC?

Spencer Greenhalgh 05:29
Okay, tough question. In my small but growing comic collection, I own more Marvel books than I do own DC books.

Cassie Ripsam 05:38
Very good, You answered correctly,

Spencer Greenhalgh 05:41
that there is a DC book in there, though. That is one of my favorite comics.

Cassie Ripsam 05:46
That's fair. I do watch DC movies, but I can't, I can't say I read the comics. I read mostly Mark once.

Spencer Greenhalgh 05:52
Okay. I also think some of the best comics, superhero comics, or other comics, come from companies outside the big two, and so I'm happy to play the Marvel vs DC game, but I believe in expanding horizons, there's a lot of great stuff that is not as well known. [True.]

Cassie Ripsam 06:11
True. Your bio also states that you were and still are, a bookworm in middle school. You really got into board games. What was your favorite board game as a child, and what were and are your favorite books?

Spencer Greenhalgh 06:26
Allright, so starting with board games. So this is what I'm getting. I am getting into nerd territory here. Long story short, Germans make great board games. My dad worked for a German company, and he would bring home board games that you couldn't find in the US. So there was a card game called Bonanza that we really liked [MA: I've heard of that one.] Yeah, that's a fun one, and it's about bean farming, which doesn't sound fun, but I promise it's really fun. That was a big favorite of mine growing up.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 06:55
Personally, I think my favorite it's not a board game, but my favorite game has to be Exploding Kittens. It's kind of exciting, but it's like ...

Cassie Ripsam 07:06
Mine was that card/board game that we have...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 07:10
Sequence.

Cassie Ripsam 07:11
Sequence, thank you.

Spencer Greenhalgh 07:12
Oh, Sequence is a good one. Yeah, yeah, I haven't played that in a long time.

Cassie Ripsam 07:16
So what are your favorite books?

Spencer Greenhalgh 07:18
Oh, let's see. I like science fiction, generally. I also like spy fiction when that's done correctly. And then a couple particular titles. There's a book by the French-Canadian author Gabrielle Roy. It's called the tin flute in English. The original title is Bonheur D'occasion, which means "second hand happiness," which is kind of a fun title. It's not a very fun book. It's kind of depressing, but, like, it moves emotionally. I had to read it in college, and I've read it several times since. It's really, really good. And then, I mentioned, I think I mentioned earlier, one of my favorite authors is a guy named Corey Doctorow, and he wrote a book called Walk Away, which is super weird, but it is one of my favorites.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 08:08

Yeah, I personally am into science fiction and fantasy, the adventure kind of I got into a book series called Wings of Fire. I've probably heard of it. It's like, got 14-15, maybe more books in it. And I'm like, I love it, but it's kind of hard to get through all the books.

08:32
I'm I'm also into fantasy, and I'm the book series I'm reading is still running, and so she's continuing to make more and more and more. When are you going to stop? Are you just going to keep on going?

Spencer Greenhalgh 08:46
My daughter is starting to discover series, and it's the same way where it's like, kid, you gotta know that you're committing to a dozen books if you're going to read this first one. So I hope you're in for the long haul.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 08:58
Oh, yeah. So you grew up in the Latter-Day Saints Church. Tell us about your transition to the Community of Christ Church?

Spencer Greenhalgh 09:08
Sure. So yeah, I grew up in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and that was a really important part of my identity growing up. And in fact, that that identity and that heritage is still an important part of my life, even if I'm practicing in a different church. Now, I never really expected that I would practice in any church other than the one that I grew up in, being a "by the rules" Latter Day Saint and doing everything right and meeting all those expectations was really, really important to me, and I was proud of myself right for being able to do all of those things. Sure, yeah, about five or six years ago, though, I got to a point in my life, and my whole family got to a point where we started to feel like our personal and family values were in tension with the values that were being expressed in church. And there are some folks, right, who are able to make that tension work, and even if they don't agree with everything in church on Sunday, the community really matters to them. And I really wanted to be that guy, but it also caused me a lot of anxiety, because all of a sudden, I wasn't doing things by the book anymore. I didn't think like other people. Eventually I came to the decision that it would be healthier for me to find a religious home where there wasn't that same pressure, right, to check all the boxes and to think in certain ways. And so I had known about Community of Christ a little bit because I knew that, you know, the church of my upbringing and Community of Christ share a lot of history and a lot of cultural aspects, yeah, but I didn't know much about the church. But the more I looked into it, the more it seemed like a place that was safe to continue those parts of my religious heritage that were really important to me, but also explore new ideas and evolve in ways that seemed important for me to evolve at the time.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 11:13
We had a friend who came from the Latter-Day Saints Church. He was an he was an older man, but he really loved the community and the not, like you were saying, that there was less pressure to do things by the book. Have you found any similarities linking the two churches? And what are they?

Spencer Greenhalgh 11:35

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So there are some obvious similarities. Both churches have a Doctrine and Covenants, even if the contents are a little bit different, both churches have some of the same church history. The names for priesthood offices are mostly the same. The similarity that really stands out to me, though, is, Mary Anne, you mentioned community earlier, just that the feeling of community, you know? We used to make a joke about my grandpa when I was growing up, that if he spent more than 10 minutes in an LDS church building, he would inevitably find at least one person that he had a connection to, right, a friend of a friend of a friend, or a friend of a relative, or something like that. And even though I've only been in Community of Christ for a relatively short time, I felt that same thing where, you know, we're a small, close-knit church with a strong identity and family and historical connections that go back and forth. And you know, I feel like you could drop me in a Community of Christ congregation, and it might take me a little longer than it took my grandpa, but eventually I could find someone that, oh yeah, we know the same person, or we've we have this connection somehow. And that's kind of a beautiful feeling to be able to experience that.

Cassie Ripsam 12:52
I have noticed the same thing, and in some case scenarios, I actually have noticed a lack of the same thing with some people. Maybe it's just some people don't make the connections as easily as others, but I've noticed we travel a lot and we make connections. And funnily enough, I went to SPEC this year and was able to look around and say, Hey, I knew this person from there, I knew this person from there, I knew this person from there, and the people are just looking at me funny so.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 13:27
Even in our reunion, it's like, everybody's related to everybody.

Spencer Greenhalgh 13:31
Yeah, and that's a funny part about reunion is, you know, I'll go to my mission center's camping grounds and that I can sense the sense of community, but it's still something that I'm growing into, because even the people my age have been going there their whole lives, and I envy that a little bit. I don't have those connections yet, but it's really beautiful to see how well these folks know each other just because of all that shared experience. I think that's something really beautiful.

Cassie Ripsam 14:00
You were a missionary for the Latter-Day Saints, and were able to visit eastern France and French speaking Switzerland. What were some of your favorite experiences in each assignment?

Spencer Greenhalgh 14:13
I think meeting people from other cultures was a real joy. And it wasn't just France and Switzerland, it was also people from all over the world. There were people from North Africa, there were people from the Middle East. There were people from China, Vietnam, from, you know, French speaking West Africa, from English speaking East Africa. I met people from all over the world, even though I was in a relatively small geographic space, and that was, that was a lot of fun.

Cassie Ripsam 14:43
That's awesome.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 14:44
I love meeting people from around the world. I think my only problem would be not being able to speak the language.

Spencer Greenhalgh 14:51
Yeah, that was, it was tricky, because I spoke French and I spoke English. And between those two, I could get, oh, I could get pretty far with a lot of the people that I met. But there were still people that there was just some sort of language barrier and I had no way of communicating with them. But even then, like, one of my favorite things was seeing how, you know, I went over there thinking French is one language, and so I can speak with anyone who speaks French, but people in Switzerland count differently than they do in France. Right? Their number for numbers for 80 and 90 are different. And there are regional vocabulary that if you move from one part of France to another, you got to pick some of that up to really make yourself understood. And that was a fun thing too.

Cassie Ripsam 15:38
There's a girl that we tutor who speaks Haitian Creole, but the but the tutor speaks French. And we didn't know how different those two were until we actually met and started tutoring and like...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 15:49
I guess it's like moving across even America, where you have northern accents and southern accents, and people in the south say y'all and stuff like that.

Spencer Greenhalgh 16:00
Yeah, yeah. I actually, I grew up in a in a town that has the word "y'all" printed on a water or tower right by the highway, and so that's kind of a local landmark. Is the Florence Y'all water tower.

Cassie Ripsam 16:12
That's really funny. I actually got that weird look from my cousin who lives in Michigan one time, for the sheer number of times I say y'all.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 16:22
And I didn't even notice how much I say it until, like, we're in Michigan, and then all of a sudden nobody says it. So, you're also a professor at the University of Kentucky teaching technology classes. I myself love technology, and I'm getting interested in computer coding. I know they offer a variety of technology classes. Which is your specialty. How much do you love it?

Spencer Greenhalgh 16:47
So, I'll start with that last part. First, I love it so much I am really lucky to have the job that I have. So, both of my degrees are actually in education, and I expected I would get a job in an education program, teaching teachers about technology, you know, future teachers, or maybe current teachers. Instead, there was what's called, what we call the information communication technology program at UK that was hiring, UK being the University of Kentucky in this case, and the ICT program, as we call it, really specializes in technology, but then also the social and human aspects of technology and how those

come together. So, I teach some technical stuff, but then I also teach a lot of you know, thinking about things. So, one of my specialties, a class that I'm teaching right now is about managing content on a website. If you've got a website with just, you know, a whole bunch of stuff on it, how do you set up the website in a way that it's easy to navigate through things and keep all that content going? Another class that I teach is about data science, which is kind of a bringing together of statistics and programming to do some research on, you know, whatever you can think of. Cool. That's really cool. So, you also research how religious and other communities use social media and the internet to gather and share a meeting. Would you share with us what exactly that means? Yeah, I'd love to so many university professors, not all, but many have a research component to their job, and the teaching component is the part that most people know about. But my job is about 50% research, and I'm really lucky in that my boss doesn't tell me what to research. My boss just tells me to do good research, and as long as I am doing good research on a regular basis, then everybody is happy. So, I have some, I have some ability to choose what questions I think are interesting and what communities I want to study. So, in terms of the nuts and bolts, I do a kind of research that is sometimes called digital traces research. The idea is that when people use websites or social media, they leave evidence behind of their use right in the posts that they use, videos that they put up, the comments, that sort of thing. Yeah. Basically, what I do is is I suck up some of those posts. So instead of interviewing people, like we're doing right now, or surveying people, I will actually write a little computer program to grab a bunch of social media posts, and then I'll try to use it to draw conclusions about what the group is up to.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 19:35
Oh, neat. That is very interesting. What kind of platforms do you kind of use? So, like, do you use websites, or do you use Facebook, or... all of the above, all of the above.

Spencer Greenhalgh 19:47
I've done a few different things. Websites are fairly straightforward to collect in this way, so I like to do that when it's a possibility. I've done a little bit of Facebook. I've done a tiny bit of Instagram. I've done a tiny bit of YouTube. Most of my career was focused on the social media platform formally known as Twitter, but, yeah, now known as X, and there have been some changes to that platform recently that have made it a lot harder for researchers to access things. So I've kind of given up on that route and looking at other things instead.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 20:25
I did not know that. Okay. What would you say to a young person who wants to study in your field of technology?

Spencer Greenhalgh 20:35
I would give three pieces of advice. First, more important than learning any single technology, is learning how to learn about technology, because the technology will change. And if you've invested all of your work in, like, the surface level, this is how I use this tech, you're going to get frustrated when the changes happen.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 20:54

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Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Spencer Greenhalgh 20:57
But if you can kick it up a level and think, Okay, how do I learn about new technologies, and you make that the skill that you're good at, then you know, no matter what changes happen, you're always going to be adaptable, and you're going to be able to keep up with the times a lot more easily.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 21:14
That's really cool. So, so like, just keep that learning mindset. Is that what you're saying?

Spencer Greenhalgh 21:22
Yeah, exactly, and as much as you can, so this is my education background coming out, like, think about what the learning process looks like in your head. What processes do you go through to sit down in front of a technology and learn how that works? The more that you can think actively about that sort of thing, the more that your focus is on the learning itself and not like the surface level skill that you're picking up. And if you can pick up what's sometimes called metacognition, which is thinking about thinking, then that's just really, really helpful, and it can make you a lot more flexible than if all you're doing is focusing on a certain set of skills.

Cassie Ripsam 22:02
Thinking about thinking.

Spencer Greenhalgh 22:07
Another thing that I would say is a lot of folks, and I don't want to generalize here, but it's especially true in younger generations, mix up being familiar with technology and actually understanding how the technology works, and that can lead to problems when you rely on your familiarity instead of having a deeper level understanding. When I was younger and having to learn technology, you had to understand certain things that today's better computers sort of take off of your shoulders, and they make your life easier for you, but because they make life easier for you, if you actually have to go down and get into the nitty gritty of how a computer works, then you're sort of at a disadvantage, because computers have made that stuff easier for you. And so try and really get deep when you're learning how to do things, and that will be a big advantage.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 23:02
Kind of makes sense, yeah, because if you know how to work a computer, you don't exactly know how the computer works, right?

Spencer Greenhalgh 23:10
And, you know, that's, that's fine to a certain extent. I don't know how my car works, but I can still drive it, but I'm not a car mechanic. I do have to program for my job, and if I, you know, let the computer use me instead of knowing how to use it, then I'm not going to be very good at the programming aspects of my job, because I don't have that deeper level understanding. Yeah, yeah. And then the third thing that I would say, and I'll make this really quick, is just technology is never just technical. It's really important to think, how is technology going to affect humans? How is it going to affect society? How is it going to

affect culture? And there are too many people in today's world who get really excited about the technology and don't think about the humans that surround it. So, the more that someone can think about that, the more responsible of a technology user and a technology professional they will be.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 24:01
So how [CR: that is interesting.] How are people going to use what I am making here, right?

Spencer Greenhalgh 24:07
Yeah, and if they're going to use it for bad stuff, right, is it worth developing this product, or how can I stop them from using it for bad stuff? Or, is this project even worth working on? What are the balances of pros and cons to society?

Cassie Ripsam 24:21
That is an interesting question. This is an interesting answer to the question with another question that makes it really interesting.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 24:31
Okay, so we were interested in interviewing you because you have written a resolution for upcoming Community of Christ World Conference in May and June. So, your resolution states, I'm paraphrasing here, that you are requesting the church leadership, sorry, the leadership of the Community of Christ to explore the possibility of applying the Creative Commons license to much of our church's creative works, am I paraphrasing that right?

Spencer Greenhalgh 25:03
Yeah, that sounds right to me. Okay, cool.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 25:06
So what exactly is a Creative Commons license?

Spencer Greenhalgh 25:12
That is a very important question for this legislation. So you can think of a creative commons license as a variation on copyright. So copyright, of course, is a legal concept that allows a creator or someone that they designate to exercise control over creative output. So, let's say the two of you write an amazing book, science fiction or fantasy, from the sounds of it. It's a great book. People are really interested in it. Copyright would protect the two of you if I tried to take that exact book, take your names off the cover, slap my name on the cover, and then start selling it for my personal profit. That would obviously be a terrible thing to do. It's very big. Copyright protects the two of you from anything like that happening. So again, copyright good thing, because creators should get credit for their work, and to a certain extent, they ought to have a say in how other people use that work. At the same time, though, there are benefits to letting people build off of each other's work, and also technologies like the internet have really changed what it means to copy and distribute creative works. So, on one hand, we want people to get credit for what they've done and to exercise control over their creative works. On the other hand, there are benefits to society, if we can share creative masterpieces with as many people as we can, and if we can let people build off of each other's ideas. So, think about Disney movies for a

second, right? I'm going to go out on a limb. I don't have firm numbers here, but I'm going to say most Disney movies are based off of stories that already existed, right? [Yes, yes, yeah.] Frozen is based off of movies that have, you know, stories that have been told for hundreds of years, right? And you were going to say another example, yeah, the Snow Queen, exactly. And, you know, [Snow White] Snow White, yeah. So we've got all of these stories out there. And, you know, I like these Disney movies, but they're not starting from scratch. They had the benefit of building off of each other's, off of creative works that already existed, and maybe, right, it would be good for society if Disney let other people riff on what they were doing, right? If there, you were allowed to take Frozen and tell new versions of it or or put together a new edit of it that was funnier in some, you know, goofy way, or something like that.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 27:47
So like fan fiction, or something like that.

Spencer Greenhalgh 27:49
Yeah, fan fiction is actually a really good example of that, right? Because people are taking ideas and they're riffing off of them. And, you know, fan fiction is very rarely a literary masterpiece, but it's crazy stuff, and it makes a lot of people happy, and so it's a good thing that people are able to do that sort of thing. So, Creative Commons is an approach to copyright that says, Okay, we want to give credit where credit is due. We want to allow a copyright owner, like, for example, Community of Christ, to retain some control over their creative works, but also encouraging people to share those creative works, and maybe even encouraging them to use those creative works as the raw materials for new creations. So for example, a Creative Commons license can give you permission to make copies of a book so long as you acknowledge who the original author is. Or a Creative Commons license can let you make copies of a book so long as you originally acknowledge the original author and promise not to make any changes to the book. Or a Creative Commons license can say, all right, share as many copies as you want, make as many changes as you want, but you can't make any money off of this. We prohibit you from making any money off of that. So there are a few different Creative Commons licenses out there, and the idea behind all of them is that the original creator of the work should still get credit for their work, and they can still make reasonable requests for how people use that work, but they also give people permission to share the work and maybe even make edits to the work in the hopes that that is going to, in the long run, produce better stuff for everybody.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 29:37
So like, for example, the, sorry, [CR: mission prayer], the mission prayer, thank you. I lost my words. The mission prayer, you could distribute that and make changes to it, so long as you give credit or make yeah, like, for example. We have a mug with the mission prayer on it?

Spencer Greenhalgh 30:06
Yeah, and that's actually a really good question, because I don't know who holds the copyright for the mission prayer, if that's in the Community of Christ or some other organization, or maybe it's not copyrighted at all. But another example, instead of the mission prayer, might be the worship helps for a

particular Sunday. So a team at World Church, or across World Church have, has put together those worship helps, and that's really valuable. It makes my life easier. It makes so many congregations' lives easier. But what if someone had an idea for you know how to put a particular twist on the worship helps for assembly that put women in the spotlight right, or that put racial unity in the spotlight, or put social justice in the spotlight, and they might be able to take the original version of the worship helps and add in a couple of extra comments that would let a congregation preach on the same ideas, share the same ideas, but with an extra emphasis that maybe wasn't there in the original worship helps. And if a Creative Commons license were applied to the original worship helps, there would be explicit permission to do that sort of thing and then share it with others, because maybe other congregations might like it as well.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 31:14
So you stated a lot of the pros of having a Creative Commons license. So, like, what would some of the cons be? What would we have to think about as we are doing this?

Spencer Greenhalgh 31:25
That's a really important question. One question, for example, is, you know, Community of Christ has a publishing house, Herald House. And I don't know all the ins and outs of how Herald House works, but I imagine that it wouldn't be great for the church if it started giving away all of its materials for free, instead of charging to acquire copies of those materials. And in a situation, right, where we as a church are thinking hard about money and thinking hard about budgets, it's important that we think about, what can we afford to give away, and maybe what can't we afford to give away. So, books that were published in the 1980s maybe there's no harm in slapping a Creative Commons license on that, because no one's really buying them anymore, right? But someone like me, for a research project, wants to read what a church leader had to say in the 1980s. There's no harm in that, but maybe more up-to-date materials, more recent materials. Herald House, and the church as a whole, is relying on some of that money coming back in to support the continued work of creating materials for mission. That's something that the church needs to think about as it considers whether Creative Commons licenses are appropriate for certain creative works. Another thing to think about is control. We are a diverse church, but we are also a church that preaches unity and diversity, and we are working hard, right, since before I've been a member of this church, the church has been working really hard to build a shared identity that we can all recognize ourselves in, even in all the different diversities that we have, from congregation to congregation and priesthood holder to priesthood holder and disciple to disciple. I think it's also really important that, you know, the church, be able to express that identity and being able and there could be ways in which letting different mission centers produce different versions of the same church document could be detrimental to that work of finding unity in all of our diversity. It's not necessarily a threat, but it's certainly something that I would be thinking about if I were in the World Church considering Creative Commons licenses is what is appropriate to let people make changes to, and what do we need to be unified from congregation to congregation in order to share an identity as a World Church?

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 33:50
So, yeah, like, what you're saying is some people could change it in a way that we don't want, you know, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's not welcoming to everybody,

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Spencer Greenhalgh 33:59
Exactly, right? And the same thing with the worship helps example that I used earlier, it, there's a danger that someone could take the worship helps and move them in a direction that isn't that isn't fully aligned with the inclusive church that we want to be. And so there are risks involved with this sort of thing if we let anybody and everybody make changes to these documents. And one thing I want to point out is that the text of this resolution is an encouragement for church leaders who know more, way more about these kind of questions than I do, to consider which works might be released under Creative Commons licenses. It doesn't ask the church to make certain creative works available under certain Creative Commons licenses. More than anything else, it's to start the conversation and consider whether this could be an appropriate step to take for certain creative works that are associated with the World Church. But it's not a demand on world church leaders to freely release particular materials. That's a longer conversation that, you know, I don't feel qualified to pronounce the final word on.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 35:09
I don't think I would, either. I don't. I tried to go on the Creative Commons website, and I found nothing as to what it was. So I'm like, I don't even know what this thing is, how am I if I were to, how am I supposed to, like, do this? [Yeah]

Cassie Ripsam 35:25
So, what prompted you to write this resolution, exactly?

Spencer Greenhalgh 35:31
That's a great question. So, at the 2023 World Conference, one of the pieces of legislation that was being considered at that time is whether the World Church should make available, freely available on its website, all of the scriptures associated with Community of Christ. And I was really excited about that resolution, because when I was first looking into Community of Christ as a potential spiritual home, you know, I'm a nerd. I work in technology, the first thing that I do is I go to the internet and I can see, I see what I can read there. And I thought, well, you know, I really appreciate this resolution. I think that if the scriptures had been online and freely available to read, that's one of the first things that I would have done, is read through the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants, read through the recent sections, try to get a sense for what this church is that I'm looking into. Ultimately, the 2023 World Conference decided not to pass that resolution because there were concerns that that would take up time and resources that the World Church just didn't have, and that it would be more appropriate to have staff and money allocated to other tasks that were of higher importance to the church at that time. And you know, I was a little disappointed at the time, but I fully, fully understand that reasoning of the World Conference that, you know, we're in a situation as a church where we're trying to figure out the best way to spend our money, because we know that there isn't as much of it to go around as we would like. It's hard to argue with that logic that we don't want to create demands on the church that don't need to be there. But that got me thinking. And one of the things that got me thinking was, you know, what if there were a Creative Commons license on some of these scriptural texts, or some of these other world church texts, I know just enough website stuff that I could put it online, and that could be a contribution that I make to my religious community. With those texts copyrighted the way that they are, that could be a potential copyright violation, and I wouldn't be comfortable doing it on it on my own. But

again, I got to thinking, what sort of things could I offer the church if the church had licensed some of its creative works in certain ways that explicitly gave people permission to experiment with them in new ways, to share them in new ways. And it was really kind of an exciting moment for me to think that instead of waiting for Herald House to do something, maybe there's something that I could contribute as long as there was permission to do something in a certain way. And again, maybe the Doctrine and Covenants is not the right text to release freely in that way. Right? That's a really important document to us, but there might be other documents that are a little bit less important, or a little bit, you know, where it would be a little bit less dangerous to give people free reign to run with it and portray them in new ways. Going back to the worship helps, for example, that could be something very interesting to see. Mission centers putting up their own variations on worship helps for other people to draw on.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 38:40
Yeah, that's a really good example.

Cassie Ripsam 38:43
So, am I correct in saying that most of our church works are written only in English, French and Spanish?

Spencer Greenhalgh 38:50
That is my understanding. But I also admit that I do not know all the fine workings of the church. I know that the Western Europe Mission Center, for example, has made deliberate efforts to translate church materials into Dutch and German, for example, but that tends to be at a mission center level. My understanding is that Community of Christ works primarily in English, French and Spanish.

Cassie Ripsam 39:10
That's what I heard when I was in you that's when I was at conference. So, would using the Creative Commons License open up the ability to translate our works into other languages, or is that a side issue?

Spencer Greenhalgh 39:26
So another thing I want to make clear is that Creative Commons is ultimately a legal contract, and I am not a lawyer, so I don't know all of the fine details here, and that is also why the resolution does not make any demands of the World Church. They would want to check with the church's general council as they make some of these decisions. My lay person, enthusiastic, Creative Commons fan understanding is that yes, but yes in a certain way, right? As I mentioned earlier, the Western Europe Mission Center has already been doing translation. And almost certainly what they've been doing is going back to the World Church and saying, You are the copyright holder on this. May we have permission to translate this into a new language? And the World Church has generally said, Yes, of course, that would be helpful. Go ahead and do that. What a Creative Commons license would change in this case is there wouldn't need to be that step of going to the World church and asking, Hey, is it okay with you if we do this before we get started? And then, you know if, if the one or two members of the church in Italy wanted to start translating things, if things were under a Creative Commons license, they could start doing it on their own time, without having to go to the world church and get explicit permission for doing it, because the Creative Commons license would give permission up front for

people to make new versions of text, so long as they, you know, make certain promises, such as to acknowledge the original author. So just make it a whole lot simpler. Yeah, it would make it simpler.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 40:58
So if this resolution were to pass, and our church leadership were to choose to move forward with applying the Creative Commons license. What Works would you wish to apply this Creative Commons license to like you mentioned, the worship helps earlier.

Spencer Greenhalgh 41:14
Yeah, If, you know, I'm a hopeful guy, I'm really excited about the Creative Commons license. If it were up to me, I would like to see the world church be as generous as possible. There are two resolutions in this year's sorry, in the legislation for the upcoming World Conference that ask the World Church to produce new kinds of texts. I'm really excited about those resolutions. Personally. I hope that both of them pass. But you know, as I already mentioned, the 2023, World Conference had a difficult decision to make over whether a particular, you know, version of the Doctrine and Covenants, whether a particular text should be made available online, and they had to wrestle with the benefits of that versus the costs in terms of time and money, in a time when we are facing real financial difficulties. If the church were bold in releasing texts, I think it would be really neat if the Doctrine and Covenants were released under certain circumstances, and if the commentaries on the Doctrine and Covenants that are published by Herald House were released under certain Creative Commons terms. Because you know what? There is enough giftedness in this church that even if the 2025 World Conference decides that the Church does not have the time and money to produce a 200th anniversary edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is what one of the resolute one of the resolutions asks the church to do, even if that resolution got voted down, but if some of those texts were made available during through a Creative Commons license, there's enough giftedness in the Church for individual people in congregations and mission centers to put their work together and create their own version of that. Would it be as fancy as something put together by Herald House? Probably not right, but at the same time, if the church were to lean into this, we could do some really exciting things, right, to put the Doctrines and Covenants online with commentary for people who are looking for the church for the first time, who wonder what the church has to say about this, that or the other. That said, I've already said, and I'll repeat now, even though I'm really excited by the idea of the church releasing a lot and trusting its members to do some exciting things with the texts that are important to us, I also fully understand that there are downsides to releasing some of these core texts to our identity in such a way that doesn't allow the church to make money off of them, or makes it that makes it harder for the church to make money off of them, or that potentially allows people to misuse them by by editing them in directions that aren't consistent with our identity as a church. So, I have great hopes, but at the same time again, I'm not making any demands of the church that the resolution doesn't say what should be done in particular ways. It just asks the church to think about what could be done by releasing some of these texts under more permissive licenses that encourage people to adapt them and to update them in new ways.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 44:22
So what, what would what do you feel is most important for people to know about the G-1 resolution?

Spencer Greenhalgh 44:35

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That is a wonderful question. Thank you. A lot of the way that I have been talking up to now makes it sound like this is a demand of the church to release things to its members. But the reason that I get excited about the creative commons license, and the reason that I feel strongly about this legislation, is because I feel like taking a step in this direction would actually open up ways for members of Community of Christ to step up and provide a disciple's generous response in new ways. We are facing difficult decisions about what the church is going to be able to do in the future. And you know what, if a Creative Commons license were out there on, say, the 2017 reunion materials, there would be an invitation for a mission center to say, what are what's in these materials from seven years ago? Who might be willing to look through them and see if we could update them and turn them into a Sunday school curriculum for the next year, or turn them into more reunion materials for the year? I do not see this as a demand for the church to make things free for us. I see this more as an opportunity for members of the church to lean into contributing to the church in new ways that may be necessary as we evolve into the church that we are meant to be in the years to come. So I think that's the most important thing to learn is, you know, this is asking the church to make a decision. But I think for the decision to be meaningful in any way, members and congregations and mission centers need to ask themselves, what can we contribute to our faith community, if the church trusts us enough with the texts that are holy to us in one way or another?

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 46:28
That makes a lot of sense.

Cassie Ripsam 46:31
So yeah, I'm excited. I'm excited to see what this is going to turn into, what it's going to do. [SG: Thank you.] Um, so last question, if you could have coffee or tea, whichever you prefer, with anyone alive or not, who would it be and what would you ask them?

Spencer Greenhalgh 46:53
You know, this is the one question I forgot to prepare for, and now I'm kind of being put on the spot. I first of all, it would be tea, because I am a tea drinker and not a coffee drinker. I see a raised hand. I'm among good company here. You know, I'm going to say the Apostle Paul. I was just thinking, I'm preparing a sermon for my congregation right now, and thinking about some of his letters, and thinking about how much of an influence he had on Christianity, and I think some of his expectations for what Christianity would be are different than what we're living out today, not in bad ways, not in good ways, just different. And it would be really interesting to talk to someone who is so important in setting up this religion that means a lot to me 2000 years later, and just getting to know the guy and think, you know what made you so excited about this? Did you realize that people were going to be reading your letters 1000s of years down the road? What do you think of how we're reading your letters today? That would be very interesting.

Cassie Ripsam 48:01
Yeah, that would be.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 48:04
Reading your letters. Thank you for being here and answering our questions.

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Cassie Ripsam 48:12
Um, I guess that's all for now.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 48:15
And just don't forget, guys, to walk in your full armor of God, Just walk In peace.