

Nice to Matcha | Adam Bouverette | Director of Human Resources

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Community of Christ, Human Resource Ministries, Adam Bouverette, ministry calling, global mission, leadership, mission priorities.

SPEAKERS

Adam Bouverette, Robin Linkhart

Robin Linkhart 00:29

Welcome to Nice to Matcha, a Project Zion Podcast series where we meet new people, leaders, movers and shakers. I'm your host, Robin Linkhart, and today I'm here with Adam Bouverette, who recently accepted the position of Director of Human Resource Ministries for Community of Christ. Adam, it's so great to have you with us today.

Adam Bouverette 00:52

Yeah, thank you. Thanks for having me, Robin. It's great to be here on Project Zion and to be able to share a little bit of my story with everybody.

Robin Linkhart 00:59

Well, we're sure looking forward to that. Now, I believe this is the first time that you have been a guest on Project Zion, and what a great way to start, because today's podcast is all about getting to know you. I'd like to start with the basic, basics. So, pretend that you are a guest minister at one of our family camps this summer and at a place you've never been before, tell us a little bit about you, just like you might do there.

Adam Bouverette 01:30

Okay, yeah, so, well, my wife and I currently live in Mason, Michigan, just south of the state capitol in Lansing. For those that are familiar with the state. We originally purchased a house back in 2000 there, and so we've been living in the area for a long time. I usually start my story out with just talking about my wife and I, so my wife, my wife, owns a veterinary hospital in Jackson, Michigan, and that's about 30 minutes south of where we live. We actually met in Independence in the auditorium at the International Youth Forum in 1999 so there's a fun history there. So, we just celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. My professional background most recently has been as administrator and director of operations for a Unitarian Universalist nonprofit collaborative in South Lansing. It's been rewarding work, managing a 40,000 square foot building, developing innovative lease models and working with, working on major renovation projects. Before accepting this role with Community of Christ, I was deeply involved in both my professional work and continuing to serve in various ministry capacities within the

church. The transition to this new position feels like a real natural progression to integrating my administrative experience with a passion, my passion for ministry.

Robin Linkhart 03:02

Well, that's fascinating. I actually did not know what your role had been right before you applied and got this job. So that's very exciting. So, we really want to start at the beginning now and get to know you. So we would love to hear your growing up story, like, where did you grow up? And we want to hear about your family life, your school, your town, throw in some hobbies and interests, just all the things. And then in the midst of that, Adam, as you share your story, tell us about God and faith as you were growing through this time?

Adam Bouverette 03:43

Yeah, so that's a big question. It's fun to kind of think about that. So I grew up in rural Michigan, in the thumb of, thumb of Michigan, so it's up by Caseville, Bad Axe, Pigeon, Elkton. I moved around quite a bit as a kid, but all in the same area up in the thumb. So it's a real community where everyone you know pretty much knows each other, and the parents are really connected to each other. I've got fond memories of being eight or nine in Caseville, and it's just one of those childhoods where you know, you'd go out with your friends, and the rule was to be back when the street lights are on, so it was definitely that kind of environment in childhood. So my spiritual journey started really early in my life. My family is connected to Community of Christ going back quite a few generations, and the Church has always been a really important part of my life. I remember going to many, many reunions, family reunions and family camps, and that was really an important part of my shaping, of my spiritual journey. Let's see. Growing up, so I enjoyed being involved in various activities. I love being active. I like mountain biking. There's, I've been working out with a personal trainer, doing kettle bell work recently, which, surprisingly, I enjoyed. And so that's been something that's pretty new. My wife and I love going to Broadway plays. We love to travel, and so that's some of the things that we love to do together. But for sure, like growing up in Michigan, there's nothing that really builds character quite like a Michigan winter and trying to stay active and do things you love to do and also get through the gloomy weather. So, that's all kind of some things that have shaped me. Looking back, I can see how God has worked in my life in many different ways. There was always the sense of being called to something beyond myself, a part, a pull towards service and community building that I couldn't fully articulate when I was a kid or growing up and go through high school, but I could look back now, I can see that was definitely a part of my shaping and journey.

Robin Linkhart 06:13

So what kinds of things were you involved in in high school?

Adam Bouverette 06:19

So, in high school, let's see. So I was, I was involved in quite a few things. So I was in a couple plays, and so I did a little bit of acting. On that side. I was also involved in football, involved in art class senior year. I think one of my favorite memories was being a part of a film class. And so, we had this TV show that only showed in high school, but we'd have the show that we would put on every couple months, and so we would go out and film things and put together. And so that was a really, really fun part of high school.

Robin Linkhart 06:52

I love it. I love that I can just see you now in this new role making videos for people. Yeah. [Yeah]. You know, one of the things that you shared that just really stood out was when you were talking about growing up in Caseville and you could go out with friends. And I'm hearing that as going out in the neighborhood with friends and playing like in the summer, you know, playing all day, and come back when the street lights come on and golly, that just brings back memories, which I'm sure a lot of people can connect with. There was a time when kids would just go outside and play and come home when the cows come home, so to speak, yeah,

Adam Bouverette 07:35

And it's hard, in many cases, it's hard to imagine that now.

Robin Linkhart 07:39

I know, that kind of is, isn't it? Okay, so, you're graduating from high school, and I'm assuming that you're ready to take off for college. I don't know that for sure, though, so go ahead and tell us what happens after high school, college, your career, family life and again, Where is that church, faith and ministry coming in and especially, we'd be really interested in the timing of, you know, your first call to ordained ministry and positions past that.

Adam Bouverette 08:14

Yeah, so yeah, in many ways, it's quite an unusual path. I actually was, my, my first call to ministry and ordination was a call to teacher in high school. So, I was a junior in high school, was called and a part of the Owendale congregation, Community of Christ congregation, again, in the thumb and, yeah, that was a really, really important and powerful experience for me to be, to go through that, to be recognized and to be called and to take that seriously and to journey with what that meant. After high school. I actually, I joined the Marine Corps after high school, and so I served. I served in the Marine Corps from 1999 to 2003 after being dishonorably just charged, I pursued my education, my, my college education after that. So, I went to Spring Arbor University here in Michigan, where I earned a bachelor's degree in organizational development and management. This was a, seemed to be a perfect fit for me for integrating in organizational functions and leadership. I saw both advantage, I saw two advantages of that degree. One was a veterinary hospital that my wife owns, and we were, we worked together for I saw that being a valuable education for that, but also for working for the church, and hoping that that could be a benefit to the church as well, and hoping that that would be something I could bring to the church at some point. So yeah, so I finished my bachelor's degree, and during this time, we, my involvement with the church was deepening. I served as pastor of East Lansing congregation in the early 2000s and participated in the co-missioned pastor initiative, which was a really formative experience. You had really dedicated people in the congregation who invested a lot and believed in and me a lot and dedicated their time and resources to make sure that they paid for that program and sent me through that and really provided a place for me to grow in ministry and leadership there, So professionally, I began what would be become a 14 year career as a hospital administrator for Crossroads Animal Hospital. So, my wife and I actually purchased the, a veterinary hospital in 2008 and we ran it together for 14 years. And so, we kind of have to skip around a little bit, but for right now, she is running the veterinary hospital with a really good management team, and I was able to step

away from that a few years ago. So, during this time, when we when, when we're, when I was working with the veterinary hospital, I also felt a call to pursue theological education. So, we were making all that stuff happen, and I decided to enroll into Chicago Theological Seminary, where I pursued a master's degree. So, I have a master's in, Master of Divinity from there. And during that time, I was also, I also was able to take coursework through Community of Christ seminary and Community of Christ scripture and theology. So, that was great that they were able to incorporate that into my degree. From 2015 to 2021. I served on a shared mission center president team in Michigan. Michigan has, at that time, had over 70 congregations, and so while I was still working at the veterinary hospital, I worked very part time and volunteered serving on that team. So, this role allowed me to participate in a work on, and work on implementing the Leading Congregations in Mission. So, participated in that and was connected to a congregation in Michigan capital congregation, and we helped guide them through that entire process. There's a small team that we went down to camp Donovan regularly and came back and implemented those things. So, that was all part of that that process. In 2023, I turned, I transitioned to my role as the administrator and Director of Operations for the UU Nonprofit Collective, and that's where I spent a year and a half there, developing, again, developing more nonprofit leadership skills. And so, through all this experience, I've continued to be involved in youth camps, counsel at Senior High camps at Bluewater campground, which was a home campground for myself growing up, and so I always want to go back and serve and mentor and you know, be with, be with youth as they're coming through their life journey and figuring out what they're going to do after high school. What's been consistent throughout all of these chapters is seeing how my administrative skills and my ministry calling really work together. Each experience has reinforced for me that effective administration really does help create a foundation that allows ministry to happen and to flourish.

Robin Linkhart 13:59

I love that. Often times in the church, as we seek to really fan the flames of mission and prioritize mission in the life of the church and all the different places and ways that mission takes shape and emerges, I sometimes realize that we tend to bifurcate the administrative task of the church and the missional task and the administrative from the ministry task. But I love the way you put it, because I think of it. I come with a background in biology, so I think of it as a skeletal system that supports, you know, the flesh and blood and everything that's happening in the body. And those two things separated can't live, but when they're put together, they can not only live but really flourish. So Adam, are you a member? Or have you been a member in the past of the theological formation team?

Adam Bouverette 15:04

Yes, I have been a part of that, that team, the most recent team, though, that working with, close with Tony, Tony Chvala-Smith, with and others, focuses, focused on baptism.

Robin Linkhart 15:17

Yeah, I'm a member of that team too. And I just, I thought I know that we've bumped into each other over the years and but sometimes I lose it, right? So, okay, that's great. So that's a great experience too, where we come together with ministers from all over the world to respond to research and response on a specific topic that the First Presidency assigned so that that can really be exciting. Exciting work. Yeah, so what brought you to applying for the role of Director of Human Resource Ministries for Community of Christ?

Adam Bouverette 15:59

Well, yeah, the journey to applying to this really kind of feels like a natural convergence of all the things that I've been working on and things that have been shaping me. So over, over the years, I've been serving in positions where I've had one foot in administration and one foot in ministry, and I've always felt that these are, these aren't separate things, like we just talked about, like they're really integral into interconnected. And so, when I saw the opening for Director of Human Resources Ministry, it resonated with me because it represented an opportunity to fully integrate the skills and my background, my experience developing HR policies, managing teams and creating professional development programs at the veterinary hospital, combined with my theological training and experience and at the Mission Center level, I just, it just felt perfectly aligned with what, what the Church was looking for. And so, the application process itself was really quite thorough and gave me a confidence in the church's commitment to finding the right fit. I submitted my application materials in November of 2024 which included my resume and cover letter and quite a few essays that they had me write, everything from leadership to church mission to leadership philosophy, all kinds of, all kinds of, different categories. The interview process was really quite comprehensive. It involved three different teams, directors and field leaders, the HR and the HR and international services team, the World Church leaders, I really appreciated how these structures allowed me to engage with different perspectives within the organization. There were, as you can imagine, several challenging situational questions that really made me think hard about complex HR scenarios. But what really stood out to me during the interview was the focus not just on technical HR skills, but on how these functions connect to the church's mission. There were questions about ensuring cultural sensitivity in international context, strategies for creating positive work cultures and how to create and retain talent when we don't always compete on compensation with other nonprofit organizations. These discussions confirmed for me that this role was about human resources ministries with resources and ministries both carrying equal weight throughout the process, I felt a deep sense that this was where my varied experiences and skills could best serve the church. The opportunity to help develop HR systems that reflect our Enduring Principles and support our mission, just felt right to me.

Robin Linkhart 19:06

That's an amazing story. I really appreciate that journey and that there's just a sense of deep call in you that brings you to this place which has taken shape in different ways in your ministry. But you mentioned early on in the interview, and then a couple times between then and speaking directly to this question, that you had a sense of wanting to work for the church. So it's exciting. It's exciting to see that sense of call and where you find yourself now coming together in this new role. So golly, you have been an ordained minister for a while now, since you were a junior in high school and you were ordained to the Office of teacher. What office do you hold now?

Adam Bouverette 19:56

So right now, I hold the office of high priest. And while I was being, going through being mentored and encouraged to go through the Co-missioned Pastor Initiative, I was called the Office of Elder.

Robin Linkhart 20:13

And it may seem odd for me to ask this question, and I ask this question in these interviews all the time, because even though you haven't been employed with the church, you've been functioning as a volunteer. And when you were on the MCP team for Michigan Mission Center, I mean, that's a full court press there as a volunteer role. So, I'm sure you can relate to the fact that as ordained ministers, even though our focus is on ministry, and we're fully immersed in that with the people that we serve, that we can become so consumed by the doing of ministry and church life that we neglect the being and the stopping and the continued need of our own souls. So, Adam, how do you nurture your relationship with God?

Adam Bouverette 21:07

Yeah, that's such an important question. You're right that ministries, in ministries, we can get so caught up in doing in our work, doing our work, that we neglect our own spiritual nourishment. And I'm guilty of that from time to time. For me, nurturing my relationship with God has been more integral over the years, and it takes different forms. One practice that grounds me is simply creating space for silence and reflection. Early mornings work best for me, there are lots of songs that I listen to and I'll meditate on. There's quite a few books that have powerful poetry that speaks really deeply and powerfully to me, and I tend to have a dialog, kind of a prayer with God, it's much more just like ongoing conversation, type of a prayer that really works well for me. I've also found that my spiritual life is deeply connected to community. I love to participate in small groups, spiritual formation groups where I where I can be open and vulnerable and honest with others, and they can be, and they can do the same with me. The accountability and authentic sharing in that setting helps me stay connected to God in a really powerful way. Nature is another way that I feel like I really connect with God. It has always been a place of spiritual connection for me as well. Growing up in rural Michigan, really close to Lake Huron, nature has always been a powerful connection for me, for the with the divine. What I've learned over time is that my relationship with God needs to be nurtured through both structured and unstructured practices. Sometimes it's formal spiritual discipline, and other times it's recognizing sacred moments in everyday life, seeing God at work, in a conversation with a colleague, or finding perspective through family relationships.

Robin Linkhart 23:21

I love. I love that. I love the way your connecting points with God are so multi-dimensional. It. It feels like it provides you with this open access that just kind of moves with you throughout your day and your life. Okay, so you're already full in with HRM. I mean, they didn't waste any time getting you on-boarded, or at least saying Adam is the new Director of HRM. So, so tell us what the role of Director of Human Resource Ministries for Community of Christ includes, and I know many of our listeners will be interested to know whether or not you have to physically move to Independence, Missouri, where Community of Christ International Headquarters and Temple is located. So, tell us all about this.

Adam Bouverette 24:18

Yeah, so actually, I was just talking with Matt Frizzell, who's the outgoing Director of Human Resources, and we have been going through a really intensive onboarding and mentoring process. And so, right now it's basically a co-role, as I'm getting up to speed on things. Yeah. So overall, the Director of Human Resources Ministry role is really multifaceted and essential to the church's mission. At its core, it's about creating systems and policies that support our staff and leaders while reflecting our

Enduring Principles and values. The position oversees all HR functions for the Church, which includes recruitment and retention of talented staff, benefits administration, policy development, employee relations and professional development programs. There's much more to it than traditional HR management. It's also about fostering an organizational culture that really, really embodies our mission and our values. One significant aspect is working with church leadership to develop HR strategies that support churches mission priorities. This means ensuring our employment practices align with our commitment to Worth of all Persons, Unity in Diversity and other core principles. The role also involves working closely with international services to navigate employment practices across different cultural and legal contexts as the church continues its global mission. Ensuring that our HR approaches are culturally sensitive and legally compliant in different nations is also an essential part of this focus. I'll also say that there's an important pastoral dimension to this work. When staff face challenges and or transitions, the HR director often provides support that goes beyond typical employment matters. This might include helping ministers through difficult transitions or supporting staff through personal crises. While the position is based at International Headquarters in Independence, Missouri, my office is in the Temple. I'll actually be working remotely from our home in Michigan, with regular trips to Independence multiple times throughout the year. This hybrid arrangement allows me to serve the church globally while maintaining our roots in Michigan, where my wife continues to run a veterinary practice.

Robin Linkhart 26:58

Wow, there are a lot of dimensions to this role. And I think, you know, at first flush, people may have a much more simplistic understanding, but integrating the ministry dimension, I mean, it's human resource ministries, right? And HR function that would traditionally, we would see in the HR department, in other kinds of organizations, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. And it means a lot to me and I already knew this, of course, that in HR we uphold the Enduring Principles of the church, the mission of the church, the values of the church, and really intentionally weave that in to how Community of Christ delivers support for human resources in the context of the organization, and you throw in this global context of, you know, as you said, different laws and policies across the world, it gets complicated really, really quickly. Yeah, so I know you're still really early on in this adventure, but how has the unfolding of this new chapter in your ongoing adventure with God already begun to change things for you?

Adam Bouverette 28:20

Well, maybe the first thing that comes to my mind is just God's reassurance at my ability to be able to cope with a really difficult transition, and that God's with me in this transition, because it's a lot to learn coming into this. This transition has brought changes on multiple levels for me professionally, it represents a shift from leading local organizations to serving the church globally, while I've been involved in church leadership for many years, moving into a full time World Church position is a significant step that allows me to integrate all of those different skills that I have in a really new way, and so I'm just learning about how I can apply those now spiritually. This transition has been a time of deepening trust. When you follow a call into new territory, there's always an element of stepping into the unknown. I found myself returning to the Church's scripture about trusting in God's promises even when the way forward isn't entirely clear.

Robin Linkhart 29:40

Wow, that you know, I think a lot of people have a similar experience as we're asked to step into roles that feel really, really big. I know I can totally relate with some of the things that you're saying. So, as a member and a minister of Community of Christ, I from the vantage point of where you are now, Adam, what are your hopes for Community of Christ into the future? How do you see God moving in the world today? And how does all of that connect with Community of Christ, a peace movement, and connect with God's vision for all creation.

Adam Bouverette 30:26

When I think about Community of Christ's future, I'm both hopeful and mindful of our responsibility, while institutional religion faces unprecedented challenges, our message of peace and community is really more relevant than ever. In my opinion, I see God moving through growing awareness of our interconnectedness, even amid division, people are awakening to how our well being is tied to others and to creation itself, which aligns with our vision of Zion. My hope is that we continue being authentic witnesses of Christ's peace in the world, desperate for healing. Our distinctive voice emphasizes the Worth of all Persons, Unity in diversity and Pursuing Peace principles that directly address so much of today's brokenness. We need to reimagine how we embody these principles for contemporary seekers, exploring new expressions of church while also honoring our heritage. As human resources director, I see my role as creating organizational foundations that allow this mission to flourish. When our employment practices and culture align with our spiritual values, we're better positioned to be authentic witnesses to Christ peace.

Robin Linkhart 32:02

When I listen to you speak, I just want to stand up and cheer that. Yes, yes, yes, yes. So Adam, is there anything that you would like to share with us today that I haven't asked you about?

Adam Bouverette 32:17

One thing I'd like to share is my deep appreciation for how Community of Christ has shaped my understanding of leadership. I've been blessed with, to witness and learn from leaders who embody humility, integrity and commitment to supporting and empowering others. These qualities have influenced my approach to administration and ministry alike. I see how effective leadership isn't about having all the answers or maintaining control, but about creating environments where people can contribute their gifts towards a shared mission. As I step into this new role, I carry with me examples of many mentors who have demonstrated what servant leadership looks like in practice. Their influence reminds me that HR isn't just about policies and procedures, it's about creating conditions where people can flourish and discover their own calling within our shared mission. I'm genuinely excited about the opportunity ahead. While the church faces significant challenges in our current context, I believe these challenges also open possibilities for reimagining how we embody Christ's mission in fresh ways. I feel honored to be a part of this ongoing journey with Community of Christ, and look forward to serving alongside so many dedicated people throughout the church.

Robin Linkhart 33:47

Well, Adam, we are really excited to have you in this new position and on the team together with all that serve Community of Christ. Thank you so much, Adam, for taking time to be with us today and for

sharing your story and being vulnerable and transparent in ways that have helped us get to know you as a real person.

Adam Bouverette 34:10

Thank you, Robin. It was a pleasure to be here.

Robin Linkhart 34:14

To meet other leaders who will be taking on new leadership roles at Community of Christ's 2025 World Conference, check out our Nice to Matcha series. You can also find that link in the show notes for this episode. As always, a very special thanks to all of you our listeners for spending a portion of your day with us. This is your host, Robin Linkhart, and you are listening to Project Zion Podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Take good care. Bye, bye.