

What's Brewing | Hope is Here | 2025 World Conference

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Hope, Community of Christ, World Conference, Mission, Temple Ministries, Non-Violence, Spiritual Awakening, Radical Generosity, Sacred Community, Pentecost, Faith, Unity, Global Connection, Prophetic Imagination.

SPEAKERS

Bunda Chibwe, Stassi Cramm, Janné Grover, Joelle Wight, Karin Peter, Mareva Arnaud Tchong, Ron Harmon, Richard James, Congregation, Blake Smith

Blake Smith 00:29

Hello and welcome to What's Brewing, a Project Zion Podcast series where we usually ask the questions, what is mission and why does it matter? But for this special What's Brewing episode, we joined the Thursday night First Presidency Worship of the 2025 Community of Christ World Conference where we hear a message of hope in celebration of all that has taken place in the days leading up to this worship, as well as the call into the future. Due to copyrights, we had to take out most of the music portions of the worship, but the inspiring words of our leaders are here in full force. We start the episode with the voice of Presiding Evangelist, Mareva Arnaud Tchong. Enjoy.

Mareva Arnaud Tchong 01:23

[singing in Tahitian ... congregation joins in]

Bunda Chibwe 01:24

My friends, what a fantastic, fantastic way to gather in sacred community. On behalf of the First Presidency, I welcome you to this worship experience. Tonight, the First Presidency will share our vision for the future, the challenges ahead and the hope we have for the future. We will hear from leaders in mission, generosity, and Temple ministries who choose hope in their faithful response to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. As we reflect on the incredible experience of our conference, we celebrate the ordination of new leaders, the diligent work on legislation, and the profound development of a statement of non-violence. We honor our journey as a people, embrace the lessons and growth it has brought us, and cast our eyes towards a hopeful future we are choosing as we continue. The Spirit in Acts chapter two, hear stories of our journey and look towards the future. May the Holy Spirit awaken our prophetic imagination about who God is calling us to be.

Janné Grover 04:20

I want you to breathe deeply, fully aware of your whole being, grounded in your body, attuned to the longing of your heart in this moment of worship. In this moment of prayer, breathe in a spirit of oneness and breathe out whatever you bring to this moment, whisper it on your exhale, if you want. You

Congregation 05:05

[humming] God we call [Congregation: "God we call." Congregation continues to hum.]

Janné Grover 05:57

God who is present and alive in our breath and being and deepest longings, we offer all that we are and all that we bring to this sacred experience. May our worship enliven our witness with voices united in your spirit of wonder, oneness, grace and peace. Indwelling presence, make of us a sacramental offering for the healing of the earth, the healing of the nations, and the healing of our human family.

Janné Grover 06:54

[Singing:] O God, we call.

Congregation 06:56

Oh, God we call.

Janné Grover 07:00

From deep inside we yearn.

Congregation 07:00

From deep inside we yearn.

Congregation 07:00

From deep inside we yearn.

Stassi Cramm 07:47

I feel compelled to sing my words. Bunda sang, Janne sang, I'm not going to sing. So how's your World Conference experience so far? [clapping]

Stassi Cramm 08:08

What an absolutely amazing week we have had so far, and we are not done yet. So, we want to stay present in this moment and continue to remain open to receive all that God still wishes to bestow upon us before we are ultimately sent home tomorrow. I have felt an undeniable outpouring of God's presence, moving through worship, through conversation, through legislation and those unexpected moments of grace. The holy spirit is alive, alive, tangibly alive among us. And yet, as we gather in this powerful moment, we do so with full awareness that the past several years have been profoundly difficult. We carry with us the wounds from those challenges. Grief, uncertainty and the lingering effects of hard decisions. There is still healing to be done within the body of Christ, but friends, what brings us to this moment is not chance. We are here because of the intricate weaving of a divine story. God's story. A story that stretches across generations. Ours is a journey threaded into the great tapestry of God's work through time, we are connected to the disciples who walked before us, just as they faced storms of doubt, persecution, and loss, so too have we navigated seasons that have tested our faith since the 2023 World Conference. We've been walking through weighty realities, we've shouldered the responsibility of caring for those who gave their lives to ministry as we met the church's retirement responsibilities while also striving to ensure that Christ's mission can thrive into the future. The decision to sell Nauvoo, Kirtland and other treasured artifacts was heartbreaking to make, and devastating to hear about. These places carry deep, spiritual and historical meaning that has not changed, and because of that, their sale created a deep sense of loss. Yet even in the midst of heartache, we have witnessed signs of hope. The sacrifices made were not simply losses or business transactions, they were investments, investments in the future, in faith, in mission, in the lives yet to be touched by Christ's Peace. And friends, we are part of something sacred and still unfolding. Hope is not something we stumble upon. Hope is something we choose, and our collective story reminds us that it is especially in the hardest times that choosing hope becomes an act of faith, an act of courage, Just like the disciples who experienced spiritual renewal at Pentecost, we are being called to let go of what is

comfortable, to open our hearts to what God is doing anew. This is a season of holy risk, a season of possibility, if we have the courage to trust where the Holy Spirit leads. So tonight, let's return once more to the Pentecost story. As we listen to the early church's response to the Holy Spirit and stories of our own responses today, may we open ourselves to new insights into how we are being called to live, to serve and to choose hope, not in some distant future, but right now in this moment.

Janné Grover 14:33

Acts two verse 43 opens with spiritual awakening and wonder. We read, 'a sense of awe came over everyone.' So, I want you to close your eyes and be fully present to the Pentecost experience we are immersed in this week. When have you experienced a sense of awe this week? What is the Holy Spirit awakening in you? How is the Holy Spirit enlivening our community to new life and new possibilities. Open your eyes. The Pentecost experience of the early church was a profound spiritual awakening and a deep recognition of God's active presence, the invitation to spiritual awakening today, right now, enlivens us to new life in Christ, and transforms how we see the world and how we engage in mission. We fan the flames of spiritual awakening when ongoing discernment is a central leadership practice, awakening us to God's call and purpose, shaping our vision to God's vision, and guiding strategic mission. We fan the flames of spiritual awakening wherever communities are creating organic networks that foster relationships, spiritual growth, and global connection, trusting what God is doing and what God will do. We must fan the flames wherever this spark is already igniting hope and enlivening new possibility.

Karin Peter 17:52

And from Acts two God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles and all the believers were united.

Richard James 18:07

The spiritual awakening of the early church led to Action, calling believers into mission together. What wonders might God be working through us if we choose to trust and step forward in faith? A young woman and her family moved to central Spain with a desire to help her community. God was stirring her heart. It was a spiritual awakening. This time last year, Apostle Carlos Mejia and I, along with some others, met with Karin in her home. We listened to her story, felt her passion, and heard of her desires to serve. In that moment, we said to her, how can we make this possible? With God's help and her initiative, she began with her immediate family, and this swiftly expanded to include 12 individuals. Then, due to an economic challenge and seasonal employment difficulties in February this year, finding work was problematic for the community. Consequently, with support from the Mission Center, we commenced providing regular meals to this community. One year later, this community has grown to 50 people, with eight confirmed members and additional baptisms planned in the coming months. Hope is here. It is real for them and for us. See what happened just in one year. It shows what is possible when we trust and we step forward in faith, what will the spirit awaken in us as we move forward in faith and confidence?

Karin Peter 21:02

Where will the Spirit lead? It leads an individual to invite others to a spontaneous walking group. They walk. They listen to each other's stories and share their spiritual journeys. It leads a family to invite other families into their home for scripture, study, snacks and conversation. The Spirit leads young adults into new forms of ministry, incorporating technical skills and social media savvy and a deep desire to experience authentic community. It leads a retiree into a neighborhood pastoral ministry, checking on neighbors, helping with difficult tasks and weekly chores. They listen, mourn, gather and celebrate. The Spirit leads a congregation to connect their financial resources with another. Congregations, people, resources, partnering in a new shared mission opportunity. It leads a mission

center to make climate justice their mission focus for leadership training, adult education and their children's Vacation Bible School experience. All these expressions are ways in which the spirit is propelling us into new expressions of community engaged in the mission of Christ. Where is the Spirit leading you?

Bunda Chibwe 23:22

Act 2:44b, 'All the believers shared everything.' Step into the living spirit of Acts 2:44, not just as a memory of the early church, but as a call for us here and now., I am especially inspired by African theological voices that deepen my understanding of this Scripture. They remind us, life in the Spirit is always life together. First, the late Bishop Desmond Tutu teaches that our humanity is intertwined. The early believers did not see others as 'them,' but as 'us.' They shared their possessions and their lives because their hearts were united. Second, African communalism affirms this truth. As one African theologian wrote, "the individual does not and cannot exist alone." Third, the Holy Spirit. It moves us toward radical generosity. One African liberation theologian says, "the Holy Spirit breaks the chains of inequality." Acts chapter 2:44 is not just about sharing. It is about resisting the forces that divide us, and proclaiming a new just order shaped by the Holy Spirit. Finally, the African ethic of pulling together, or "arambe" calls us into collective action, living faith through solidarity, mutual care and hope. I've witnessed this in African congregations during funerals, weddings and the pandemic, from those who live our enduring principle of blessings of community. This is the same spirit that moved at Pentecost, and it is still moving, calling us beyond individualism into true community. Those scriptures lack in the welfare of others reside our welfare. Spirit led generosity and the ethic of pulling together. African voices powerfully echoes how the early Christian lived. We are called not just to believe together, but to live together, to share together and to be bound together in love. May the Holy Spirit keep pulling us together until all who believe are truly one and all things are shared for the glory of God.

Ron Harmon 27:15

From Acts two, verse 45, "They would sell pieces of silver and property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them." God's creative abundance in action. I've always been deeply moved by the account in Acts two of the birth of the early church. This powerful example of radical generosity inspired the early saints in Kirtland as they gathered together, sharing all things for the common good, even in the face of hardship and struggle, their conviction only deepened as they sought to embody Divine Love in tangible ways in sacred community. The Saints in Kirtland lived into God's creative abundance, not an abundance that kept them from hard times, but one that gave them spiritual strength and help them to find just enough when the way forward was unclear. They broke bread together. They prayed together, they supported each other and cared for one another's needs as if they were their own. They were an authentic expression of the one they claimed to follow. Simplicity became the spiritual discipline that opened them to divine grace and made them more receptive to God's abundant presence. It gave them the freedom to let go of the pull of everyday culture and focus on what truly mattered most for the blessings of all. This spirit of generosity and abundance is deeply rooted in our scripture. From the creation story to the Exodus wilderness, through the Levitical practice of Jubilee to the life and ministry of Jesus that led to a small, bold movement at the edges of the empire that dared to call Jesus Lord. It's a persistent message that calls us today to bring good news to the poor, to set people free and to lift up the oppressed. Since the 2023 World Conference, Carla, Wim and I have sensed the spirit nudging us toward a renewed focus, a deeper understanding and bold practice of generosity as prophetic response to a growing mindset of scarcity in our world today. The generosity of the early believers was real. It was bold and it was visible. It reflected their deep trust in God's creative abundance and their desire to offer the totality of their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Their care for one another became their witness, and Acts tells us this, "the Lord added to their numbers daily." So, how will we embrace God's generosity and creative abundance to counteract the fear of scarcity that is threatening to divide us as a global family as we give our World Mission tithes today? We join in supporting this sacred work of this World Conference and our spiritually led movement, A

gathering where we discern and worship and fellowship and yes, choose a future of hope. When we share faithfully and generously God's love and compassion continues to grow without end. Let us pray. Generous and loving God, embolden our practice of generosity as prophetic response to the growing mindset of scarcity in the world today, in the name of Jesus, the peaceful one, I pray. Amen.

Janné Grover 33:34

Acts 2:46, "Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes." They shared food with gladness and simplicity, Temple ministry, table fellowship, nurturing body and spirit with joy and simplicity, what a wonderful blueprint for discipleship in sacred community. We know that the temple is more than a building or a destination, it is a living instrument of revelation calling us to deeper reverence and connection with God through this instrument of revelation and the ministries flowing into the world like streams of living water. We are invited into transformative encounters with the divine, encounters that heal and reconcile as we sit together at sacramental tables and choose to live sacramentally, committed to the restoring of a broken and beautiful world that is longing to be made whole, encounters that strengthen faith and knowledge as we allow ourselves to be formed by the Holy Spirit, through our bold witness and courageous work of oneness in Christ, encounters that propel us forward in Christ's mission.

Joelle Wight 35:57

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of teaching a pre-baptismal lesson to a group of kids here at the Temple. The evening's topic was Christ's mission, our mission. We talked about what Christ came to do, bring good news to the poor, release the captives, give sight to the blind, free the oppressed and proclaim God's favor. We explored how we are invited into that mission by seeing the world as it is, dreaming of how it could be, and then taking intentional action to bring us closer to God's preferred future. As our evening neared its end, we walked slowly and calmly. There were no running. Eight year olds together to the mission prayer hallway, where the prayer is displayed in many languages. We paused in that sacred space, surrounded by evidence of diversity and call, and we remembered Christ's mission takes all of us out in the world, participating in God's good purposes. This, my friends, is what it means to be a people of the Temple. It isn't about gathering in a specific place, even though that is wonderful. It's about living what this symbol represents in our daily lives. It means embodying hope, compassion and justice in our own contexts, trusting that God's preferred future is possible when we are willing to faithfully respond. In the next three years, the Temple will be at the heart of the Community of Christ Peace Forum, amplifying our role as peacemakers; the International Youth Forum, forming a new generation of disciples, and the 2028 World Conference, shaping our future together. The Temple will also be a source of expanding hybrid and in-person ministries and providing multilingual resources that reflect our global diversity. We are being called into bold innovation and sacred risk, trusting that God is still revealing new pathways forward. May we respond courageously and live as Temple people, embodying Christ's peace wherever we may be.

Bunda Chibwe 39:37

Acts chapter 2:47, "They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved." We are called to be a living church. In Africa, at some time. congregation, Jerusalem congregation, Boma congregation, Messina in the back congregation, to just name a few, we have witnessed that when worship becomes a lifestyle, faith is lived out loud, and community is rooted in love. The Holy Spirit moves powerfully. The early Christian church praised God, lived faithfully, and shared God's goodness openly. They did not chase people. They lived the gospel and God added daily to their number in the same way these African congregations experience numerical and spiritual growth daily. It is my strong testimony that our churches grow when our lives preach louder than our words, when kindness, joy, and justice are visible. Faith, my friend, is not private. It is public, embodied in how we welcome, serve and love.

Stassi Cramm 41:48

Acts two paints a picture of spirit filled community, marked by awe, generosity, unity and joyful fellowship. The early believers didn't just worship together. They shared their lives. They met daily, supported one another materially, and lived with open hands and open hearts. Their faith was visible, practical and contagious. This passage reminds us that sharing Christ's peace is more than speaking words. It's about creating communities where all can belong, where needs are met, and where God's goodness is demonstrated through our actions. It's the same peace that descended like fire at Pentecost, the same peace that strengthened Paul in the prison, the same peace that has carried us through difficult decisions and transitions and has blessed us abundantly. So far this week, God invites us to continue to open our hearts to Christ's peace, to trust that even amidst the change, we are being guided by continued revelation of divine purposes. Friends, we are pioneers in uncharted territory. We are living in a world that looks and feels different even than just two years ago, and yes, that can feel very unsettling. But who doesn't love a good adventure? This is not a time for fear. It's a time for faith, a time to take the next faithful step, just one step and then the next together, even when the path is unclear. The Psalmist reminds us that God's word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path, not a spotlight for our whole journey, just a sacred light to guide that next step. And that light has brought it to this place and will take us and send us out from this place. Look around. Community of Christ is a diverse people living and serving in many different countries and contexts and cultures. We could allow our differences to divide us, but this week, we are signaling to the world that we can struggle together with difficult, albeit important topics, listening to each other in mutual respect, even when we faithfully disagree. We are becoming citizens of a new community, as demonstrated in the body this week. Paul referred to it as citizenship in heaven, part of the body of Christ and members of the household of God. We have called it Zion, God's peaceable kingdom, the reign of God, communities of joy, hope, love and peace, just to name a few. We struggle to find words to capture the essence of what it means to be connected with others in the way God has always intended us to live that identity comes before nationality, before culture, before politics, before local tradition. It roots us in the peace of Christ, and it calls us to a deeper way of being. So, what does it mean to be a citizen of this new community? Doctrine and Covenants Section 163, paragraph 8c, gives us this vision, the entire church is to become a sanctuary of Christ's peace, a spiritual home of all nations, ethnicities and life circumstances, this is our sacred calling, to break down walls of division and embody God's radical hospitality. That vision is compelling because it reminds that as we contextualize Christ's mission, it is not about allowing the culture to shape who we are. Rather, it is about allowing who we are, as called by God, to signal a new way of being to the cultures where we live and serve. Doctrine and Covenants 164:5 speaks to our citizenship, reminding us that being baptized into Christ makes us a new creation. Through the gospel of Christ, a new community of tolerance, reconciliation, unity in diversity and love is being born as a visible sign of the coming reign of God, not 10 years, not five years, not two weeks from now, but today, tonight. It's here. It's coming, and we are called to be a part of it. From our story as a Restoration movement and from the broader story of faith, we know this path has never been easy. But faith and the stories we've heard tonight and throughout the week remind us nothing is impossible when we follow God. God, who lights the way like Jesus, we must pray, 'may Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' We may not end up where we thought we were headed. We may have to let go of things we once held dear and yes, perhaps most frightening of all, we may be called to grow in ways that change us completely. But that is the path of discipleship. That is what it means to be a people who believe in continuing revelation. That is the call of a prophetic people. Let's be honest about where we are. We are not yet what God needs us to be, but we're moving in the right direction, and God is working with us. Tonight and throughout the week, we have heard examples of how we are learning to live our Enduring Principles, and how we're growing and making them a way of life, a life of generosity, grace, peace and sacred community; a life that embraces risk, vulnerability and deep and abiding trust in each other and in God. We are learning to go deeper in creating God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, as we live God's will. Everyone matters. Everyone is needed to write this next

chapter of our collective story. So, rather than worry about what if we get it wrong, let's dare to live in the hope of what if we get it right. Let's step out, trusting that God is already working among us from the continuous discernment of the Leadership Council, we offer these five steps to guide us, not as a map, but as principles for pioneers who are boldly stepping into uncharted territory. First, spend time on your knees, continuously discerning what matters most. Second, make the tough decisions to focus our resources on mission, leadership and faithful stewardship by developing spiritually grounded prophetically bold leaders, ministers and disciples and responding with courage rooted in hope to global challenges such as the ones we are talking about this week. And third, nurture local expressions of global movement through spirit led organic networks. Fourth, expand the sacred ministries of this special place as a beacon for the peace of all, and finally, hold ourselves accountable to be faithfully reflecting, evaluating and responding as God leads this moment. Our moment is part of something far greater than just us. It's an invitation to move onward in faith, to honor the legacy of those who came before us to live as bearers of Christ peace and to choose hope. So let us lean into the vision of a sacred community where all are welcome, where every person, regardless of gender, orientation, background or circumstance, is invited to choose hope as part of a new community, a world where in the words of the hymn we will hear in a moment, For every one born, everyone born, a place at the table. Will you move over and make room? Will you reach out and invite others to join? Will you trust that God is creating in us a new community for today and for the days to come? Let that be the hope we choose as we faithfully create this community with God.

Mareva Arnaud Tchong 56:29

Let's pray *atu aura, Jos viviente, je vivant*, living God, source of all hope, sacred hour, we turn to you with hearts filled with gratitude and with every impulse your spirit awakens within us. You have called us, not only to speak of Zion, but to live it, to love it, and to share it; to become a people where peace grows, not as a distant dream, but as a reality woven through our shared path. Today O God, we choose hope. We choose to see your kingdom at work, even amid challenges. We choose to love without fear, to reach out without delay, and to build bridges where others might only see walls. When voices of questioning and seeking arise, grant us the grace to welcome them with gentleness and patience, for we know these conversations are also seeds of transformation. Strengthen within us the conviction that the way of generous love, the way of Christ, does not result in a dead end, but opens a horizon of life, resurrection and fulfillment in the peace you have promised. Breathe your spirit upon your people, Lord. Awaken in us dreams greater than our fears, visions stronger than our wounds, and faith bold enough to hope for all things and to act for your love. Make us joyful witnesses, bearers of your light in daily life, in every heart and wherever you send us, make us preserving and bold artisans of your kingdom. Sent by your love, we choose life. Sent by your promise, we move forward with hope. Sent by your Spirit, we become signs of Zion here and now. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Light and our *Espoir, Esperanza*, Our hope. Amen.