

What's Brewing | East Brewton | WayneEllis

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

church, congregation, grits, baptism, call, growth, ministry, mission, service, community

SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Wayne Ellis

Blake Smith 00:27

Hello and welcome to What's Brewing, a Project Zion Podcast series where we ask the questions, What is mission and why does it matter? I'm your host, Blake Smith, and I'm here with a growing friend of mine, Wayne Ellis. I'm actually... we're sitting together at Bluff Springs campgrounds in McDavid, Florida, which is where I grew up. So I'm, I'm kind of back home this week. And I'm just really glad to be able to sit down with Wayne and talk to him about what is happening at the East Brewton congregation in Alabama. So welcome, Wayne!

Wayne Ellis 01:01

Glad to be here.

Blake Smith 01:02

It's really, really good to have you. Wayne, we like to start off these episodes by letting our guests tell a little bit about themselves so we can get to know you better. Would you be willing to do that?

Wayne Ellis 01:12

I would. Alright. I grew up in a rural community as a young man, and I belonged to, as a boy, a Baptist congregation there and was baptized in that church when I was 12 years old, and those people nurtured me all throughout my life. And I met a wonderful young girl when we were 16 years old, and she happened to belong to the Community of Christ church. And so she struggled with me for a number of years and in a congregation in Brewton, AL that loved me into the fellowship, and was shared the story of the old Go Ye and Teach slides, [all right], and made my decision to be baptized. And just a short period later, we had our children. We have a son and a daughter, and three grandsons, and Betty and I began to work in the church. I was called to the priesthood a short time after I was baptized, and served in the church as a priest for a number of years. And then they, I was called off as Elder. And two weeks after I was called to the office elder, was elected the pastor of the Brewton congregation church, and what a shock that was.

Blake Smith 02:54

A shock that you were to asked, or you were shocked that you took the position?

Wayne Ellis 02:58

I didn't I really didn't even hardly know what a pastor was. And so, but it was a wonderful journey. And I served that church for 16 years in a row there and wait grow, we grew with alone with a group of loving people, we grew that church to be over 100 people and when we started, it was about 20. And so we grew that church and, and you know, the Saints just were really, really good with us and all. My wife was called the, Betty was called to the Office of Elder and she served the church for two years after I did ... the time that I did and along in the T2000 era, if that means anything to some of you that are listening, the church went into a program of planting new churches. And so they came to Betty on I. Many of you might know Bill Dodds. Bill was one of the leaders of that movement and ...

Blake Smith 04:06

Bill Dodds was one of my mentors.

Wayne Ellis 04:08

Was he? A fine person. [Yes.] And so Bill came to us along with the apostle and asked us to step away from the Brewton congregation and start a different ministry. And I'll have to tell you that we live in a community that's both Brewton and East Brewton, and there's probably 9000 people that lived in both towns. So it's just small ... [total?] Yeah. [Okay.] So it's a small, small town. And what they wanted us to step aside and of the congregation and, bear in mind Betty was raised in his church from the time she was a child. All of her family was there. And they had a beautiful facility. We had built a nice educational building, really a beautiful sanctuary there. And to be perfectly honest with you, when they asked us would we do it, we could not make our minds up to leave that place. And so they, they pursued us, you know. And so we prayed about it. And we made the decision to step away and started a group. We started a group. And it was just Betty and I. [Wow] We didn't have anybody. We didn't have a facility. We didn't have anything but our home. And we started the congregation, or the group in our home and a lot of days, and a lot of nights, nobody came. And the Lord began to bless us and we, we outgrew our home. And, and when we left there and went to a place, rented place, in Brewton.

Blake Smith 06:02

About how long of a time period was that from the time you started your own church, to where you are?

Wayne Ellis 06:08

About two years. Okay. And, and we, we could not afford a really nice place. And we rented the building and had three families, us and two other families. They gave \$50 a week to pay the rent, to the building, and the congregation paid the bill. We grew that group and that place to be over 100 people, and of every walk of life. And we was a place where all was welcome. You know, it wasn't uncommon to smell liquor on people's breath. It wasn't uncommon to have somebody come to church...one Sunday morning, a man come to church, and I cooked breakfast for him, before church, and that was the kind of congregation that [that's amazing]. And so we didn't have no sound system, we had a boom box. And then we took, I'll tell this little story and I might be getting long. But we didn't have any podium to preach from and share from. Now I had two young teenage boys there that their mother was divorced and, they had a hard time and we baptized the woman and her three children. And they became a part of our congregation. And so I told them boys one day, we need to build a podium where we could stand behind it. And I said I got an idea here. It's a cardboard box in your trash behind the church. Let's make it out of that cardboard box, and me and them two boys took that box and we glued it and formed it just

like a podium to where it was, to where we could stand behind it. They painted with paint and it was black. And it was so important to us, that cardboard box podium was, that them young boys picked that box up and put it in a room after we used it on Sunday to protect it. [Oh my goodness.] We used that podium for a number of years there, and that's what we perched. And so it was a it was a shock from where we had come. From the church with stained glass windows, carpet, you know, padded seats, you know, and just home to Betty, you know, [right] to a situation like that. But it was the best thing that we've ever done.

Blake Smith 09:07

Now this group that you were forming is that the formation of the East Brewton congregation?

Wayne Ellis 09:11

That's the formation of East Brewton congregation. And when we began to look for us a building, and this was when the T2000 stepped in to help us. And we found a building in East Brewton that we still are in. We've been in that building almost 30 years. And we couldn't afford to build. It was more than we had. We had about 25 people that was able to give but a lot more that came, but that was about as many as we had that was able to give, and so we wanted the building, but we knew we couldn't afford it. So we had some connections, where some of the people of the church that we have known for years in Independence. And we, they got on board with us along with Bill. And they, we got the man down off the price of it a little bit, and they gave us \$35,000 in a grant to buy the building. [The church?] The church did. And so they put us on the map. The building is, is has been suitable for us for 30 years. And it is a storefront building that had a drugstore in it. And we went in and redone everything in it. We made classrooms in it, a kitchen, everything and we began to have church there, and we were perfectly comfortable in that building today. And anybody that goes there is perfectly comfortable in that building. And we've had a [...]

Blake Smith 11:11

Do you think do you think that that building versus the Brewton congregation that was the padded seats and the stained glass windows, do you think that has had anything to do with the comfort it created.

Wayne Ellis 11:21

It does because when we began to look to see where we felt like God was calling us, we had established in the rented building that we casually dressed, we didn't have a piano player, we played all praise music, we got a cardboard podium. The people was able to come to church in shorts or whatever they had to wear that was... long as it was presentable. And people that knew they couldn't put any money in the collection or knew they might not have gas money to get back home, knew they could come, and they did there and we began to grow, we baptized nine at one time here at Bluff Springs at one time. It was the biggest group we baptized. But we grew and we have always been a church that the doors were open. And people might stay with us several years. And they might move out of town, they may... their lives might change. They might go back to where they came from in life. But they're still a part of that church. And I get telephone calls, we get visits. We'll look up one Sunday and one of them will walk in the door. You know, and it's like a homecoming. And hundreds, literally hundreds of people that have been through that church and found the Lord Jesus in their lives. [Wow.] You know, and we, we grew a lot and now that we have a big screen on one wall of our building, this

takes up the whole wall, we have a really nice sound system. You know, we've got any kind of music you can play and we play it. You know, we, there's no no difference in the place in the room. Everybody's on the same level. When we preach, we're among the people, you know. [So no stage?] Yeah, there's no stage in the building. And if somebody wears a tie, they haven't been to church. They're... [It's the first time.] Yeah, and most of the time, they'll take it off if they do come with a tie. Over those years. I just so many things are coming to mind. This is so exciting. Over the years, I know you said that you and Betty started it. It was just the two of you in the home church and there were nights/days that nobody showed up. Over the years, how many established church members became part of that group at some point? We, when we first started, we grew kind of fast, you know, and baptized, acquired a number of people, but we found that we were working with a group of people that was not real stable. You know, they were from place to place, you know, [Sure] And so, they weren't like permanent people, you know. They come and went and we baptized a lot those people, but we grew that church. Probably, the most people that we had attending at one time was probably 50, you know, before the COVID came, you know, and that really hurt us. But, but anyway, we normally kept, we normally had 40 to 50 on Sunday. And our worship service includes everybody. You know, we, our people in our church do everything but serve the sacrament and preach. Other than that, all of what takes place in the worship service is the congregation. And we had a young boy Sunday, about four or five years old, that took the offering up, and he was the meanest little boy you've ever seen in your life, you couldn't keep him still. And he got that offering plate Sunday, and he went running in that room and collecting the offering. He was the happiest little fella you'd ever seen in your life then you know, so we won, we won for peace on that morning. And so that's kind of how our Church has always been.

Blake Smith 16:15

When I think about Doctrine and Covenants, and I think it's... and listeners, somebody will probably correct me, I think it's like section 146 about being in the forefront. You guys have been in the forefront for a long time with this welcoming and inclusive ministry that just anybody off the street, I mean, a lot of our churches now we're trying to do that trying to come and part of the reason why I asked you if there were established church members that came with you is because I think sometimes the more people who were steeped in tradition that are part of it, the more we're hesitant to try something new. And it sounds like you and Betty were just like, we're going to do this. I know. I know, Bill Dodds well enough to know that he was supporting that.

Wayne Ellis 17:01

Yeah. And when we began, the agreement was and the, and to go back to the Brewton congregation, Betty and I had been there so long, the Brewton people that we had worked with for years, they come to resent it, that we were leaving, you know, and then it, and I say this kindly, but they didn't support us leaving that congregation. They wanted us to stay. [Sure.] And so anyway, the rule was between both groups that we could not interfere with any of the membership of the Brewton congregation. So we've had three or four groups of husband and wife over the years that have left the Brewton congregation and come with us and they're still with us. They saw the vision, and they had the desire to change. You know, Brewton was a very traditional church, and they were willing to do whatever it took to be able to give people a chance that was less fortunate, you know, and to be able to have a church home. And so we do, we did a few couples that did that with us. And so, but the people that we brought along into the church, they caught a glimpse of what the church was about, you know, and just really became excited

about spreading the gospel. I've, Betty and I have not went out into the, into the town hardly any through the years. Because they ... [word of mouth], the words of mouth and the people that came would bring people back with them. And so that's how the church grew.

Blake Smith 19:15

That's the testimony of the ministry that ...

Wayne Ellis 19:17

They brought, the people built the church that started coming to church.

Blake Smith 19:22

Wonderful. Now you said you had about 50 before the pandemic. [Yeah] The pandemic hurt you. What does the Brewton congregation look like now?

Wayne Ellis 19:31

We have on a good Sunday about 25. We have Sunday school. We have 11 o'clock. We don't have Sunday night. So this is and we have Wednesday. And we do our service is never the same. There's somebody different in charge of the service every service we have. Nobody permanently does anything there and so... We have 13 priesthood members in our congregation. And it probably, in a number of instances, won't be a priesthood member, this response is over the church or over the church for it. Yeah, it will be somebody might be just out of the congregation. And they might not be a priesthood member that serves and does anything in that congregation, but preaches or serves the sacraments. And that... everybody there has a part, even our kids, and we do. On Sunday morning, and so it's kind of like an unusual situation. We had a young child that came to church one Sunday with her grandmother. And she came to one of the ladies in the church and she said, Do you have anything to eat? I'm hungry. And the girl went back and she found some cookies or something that was in a church. And someone said, let's have a bowl of grits next time. And you know, that's a southern thing.

Blake Smith 21:13

Yeah. I've enjoyed having them this week. So

Wayne Ellis 21:17

For probably the last 15 years, or more, we have had grits on Sunday morning for the kids, and anybody that comes to church that wants grits, and that's served every Sunday morning. And we have kids that come from home, that would not have breakfast if they didn't eat the grits at church. And so that's become what we call the Grits Ministry. And those kids, they are able. I was told one time by one of our apostles said, when I was doing some work with him. And he told me one time he said, you can't bring ministry to somebody that their stomach is growling. [That's right.] And that was Everett Graffeo told me that and, and so that's true. You know. And so anyway, we do that on Sunday morning. We, our kids is involved in the 11 o'clock service. Wednesday night, we have an intergenerational service. We may color pictures. We may have a Bible study. We may have for the kids, we do "searching for scriptures." You know, we may make a little craft, but we mix all of that together with the adults and the kids. And everybody has something. Everybody is able to participate. And we do that every Wednesday night. We don't change that. And, and we, it's exciting because you don't ever know what you're gonna

do. When you go, you know, you don't never know what everybody's got. Yeah. You know, in the same way on Sunday morning. We don't have a traditional service. You don't never know what you gonna sing. You don't never know what's going to happen in the service who's gonna pray or any of that. All of that is coming from the congregation. And what is something wonderful has happened to us in the last number of months... We had a woman that showed up at church one Sunday, and she told me when I invited her into the building. She said, I'm a Mormon. I said, Well, that's great. Then she said, I have decided want to find me another church. She said I got up this morning, and I prayed to God to show me a way and where he wanted me to be. And he said she said, "You might not believe this," but she said, "when I got in front of this church. It was just like God turned my steering wheel and turned me in this parking lot." And she said, "when I opened the door, I knew I was where God wanted me to be." And this lady's still with us. We baptized her in the church.

Blake Smith 24:37

That's a great story. Didn't she know about grit ministry first.

Wayne Ellis 24:41

No, she didn't, but she gets her bowl of grits every Sunday. We had another lady that showed up one Sunday morning. And she actually knew the other lady that came but they have not talked. And she came in and she said, "I'm looking for me a church. I belong to the Mormons." I said, "you at the right place." And so she came in. This woman began to come to church with us. We baptized her in the church. Those two ladies are two of the hardest workers that we have in the church. And just a marvelous experience with them two girls, and they that ... I'm gonna step out on a limb, and say that both of those ladies say they have found the gospel, and it's where they know they're supposed to be. And so they, it was, it was just a good experience for us, you know, to do that, for that to happen to us, you know. And so,

Blake Smith 25:52

Well, it sounds like you guys are doing the right things, you know, and just being there and being available and your presence there is just bringing people in, and they're finding you. God's leading them that way. That's great. You have some other ministries I think that you're doing, I'd be interested in having our ... Well, before we go into that, I guess I want to do a little side note and say to our listeners, if, if you've haven't had grits, I want to say that you should give them a try. Don't just knock them off because it sounds bad. But also, the proper way to eat them in case you didn't know is with butter and salt. So they're not like oatmeal. We don't eat them with sweet, right? We don't eat them with syrup or whatever, Brown sugar or whatever. So if you're going to try them, you got to try them right. But anyway,

Wayne Ellis 26:47

And don't get the instant.

Blake Smith 26:49

And don't get instant, right? That's like eating microwave popcorn.

Wayne Ellis 26:55

Yeah, obviously out a little bit of what about what we're doing now. And to share with you of how that we get done through the year. If we did something, and we started a new ministry, and it didn't work, over a period of time, we quit doing it, and we started something else. It just didn't fit, you know, and so we didn't, we weren't defeated. We just said maybe we need to do something else and put our efforts in something and see if we can bring better ministry doing something else. And so we have a group of people that will just change overnight. They're committed, they're looking for ways for us to do different thing for outreach, just spontaneously we had a man to say a few weeks ago when they had the day of prayer then he said, "let's set us up a table outside and a tent. We got a tent. And he said let's put up some signs that we're observing the day of prayer and invite people to stop. And we will have prayer with 'em. [Wow] We put the tent up. [Did you?]. Got outside, the first person that came to see us was a Baptist minister. [You're kidding.] And he said, Now y'all don't beat him up too much. Because I was raised in the Baptist Church, right? So anyway, he came and he said, "listen," He said, "My wife come by here." And he said, "I've gotta have surgery come Monday." And he said, "my wife said," I forget what his name was now said, "You need to go over there to the Community of Christ Church. They got a sign outside that they will pray for you." And she said, "God spoke to me and told me to tell you to go over there and let them folks pray for you." Well, he walks up, and he shocked me. He said, "I'm the Baptist minister," and so I said, "Oh my goodness." Maybe he's fixin' to (getting ready to) do something mean to us, you know, just playing with that. But anyway, he said, "I want ya'll to pray for me. We got out in the in the front of that church and locked arms with that Baptist preacher and prayed for him. And in there, he left there a Spirit-filled man, praising the Lord for the healing that he looked to happen in his life. And he was amazed and so were we because the Spirit was so strong, in that. He broke the barriers down. There was no religion there. It was, it was God lovin' people joinin' each other in prayer. And so that was a big thing. So we're spontaneous, and do things like that. They don't take a lot of planning for. We do a thing that we call GAP, that's "Grill and Pray," is what GAP stands for. We have a big charcoal grill. And we put charcoal and wood in there because it makes it smell good and it attracts. You seen this one, we put it in the front of the church. We got signs up, Free Hamburgers and free hot dogs. And we got us got a table over there we got a place people can put prayer concerns in. They can, we will have prayer with 'em if they ask. And so we cook hot dogs and hamburgers, and everything we cook is free. And we have people comin', over and over and over. And oh have we baptized anybody? No, but we cause smoke in front of the church and people saw, you know, and they know we're in the community, you know. And so we do that. We also do our Thanksgiving dinner every year. And the way we get the food to do this Thanksgiving dinner, is we asked our we'd like to meet you and we ask our people to bring a can of whatever that we're gonna have. And we do a traditional Thanksgiving meal with Turkey. And, the first year that we did it, we did 150 meals and we give out (ran out) of food. And so we're going, we have steadily increased that. And so people can come get a plate, we'll have a church full of people sitting down eating. And so we do that every year and, and have a tremendous amount of fellowship. Our building sits in a parking lot where parades are brought together for Christmas and Thanksgiving and those kinds of events. And the parade goes through both towns, but our church is in that parking lot. [wow.] And so we got to noticin' how many people that was there. So we decided, someone said, "I bet those people need to have to go to the bathroom." Because they're there for hours. [While they wait] Right. While they wait. [Yeah.] And so one of the guys went out and he invited him to use the bathroom. Well, they came. So, we decided we would have coffee, and it's cold when you're hot chocolate and cookies. We had over 100 people that come into church last year, and in celebrating with us. And it was amazing people said, "I want to give to this. So next year, y'all will

be here." And so they donate money for us to be able to finance what we're doing. And so they, we have people there to greet them and to fellowship with them and, and everything and it's been a marvelous thing. Just ask somebody to use the bathroom, you know, and it's opened up for us. Have we baptized anybody? No, no, we haven't. But they know we're there. They know the church is there at the heart of the community. And so we do that. And we do a nursing home history, or a few of our people days. And they do birthday parties for the people in the nursing home, they carry meals and things like that. And so we do that ministry. I got this wrote down. Y'all have to tell me to hush. But, let me see. We ... oh, we have a thing in the church that we call Helpin' Hands. And one of our men built us a box that's got a little slot in it, and we encourage our people to give to that "Helping Hands." Well, they gave me the responsibility to use that money to help people, with not having to keep up with who I gave it to. Or how much I gave. I have helped hundreds of people with the gifts of the congregation that goes into that "Helpin' Hands," even our own people. I've bought gas for people in our congregation to be able to come to church. I've paid light bills with some of our people that were women in our church to be able there was gonna be turned off. And we've been able to do that privately with individuals, and be able to bring the ministry to people that are hurting, and we're right on the highway, and people from time to time will stop by there and need gas money to get somewhere. We we always give to that for that fund. So we have that we that we do. And to share a little bit about how we get all of this done if I could ... [absolutely] We actually have what we call a mission and vision group in the church. And they're made up of three or four people that looks at our congregation and the needs in the community, and they drive other groups, we have an outreach group that does some of the this that people... you can join these groups. And the mission and vision gives them the challenge to reach out in these areas. They might be one of those groups that does the Thanksgiving dinner, and that they will have that responsibility. But I personally am over the Hospitality Group. That's one of the groups we have. And we take care of all of the meals of the congregation. We do all of the funeral ministry, all of the hospital ministry, all of those things is done. We meet once a month, we'll send cards, we send, we got them text messages to people that we have the numbers up. And it's an invitational thing that we invite people to come. If somebody misses a Sunday, they get a text before the weeks over, if someone comes in our church, they get a visitor's card. If they put their telephone number down, they've messed up 'cause they going to get a call the next day. And that's the way we've handled people that comes in our midst. But this mission and vision group drives the groups. They have a worship group, and they drive these individual groups and we'd meet regular. And in these people that's in that mission and vision group they're pretty... they that they are pretty strong, that they encourage you to do what you're supposed to be do. You know, and they keep us on track. You know, and we've found, that our whole church is working in these groups. We have a finance group that takes on there. We have a group that takes care of our building, and but they still are under this mission and vision and they're held accountable to be about the work that they do. And that's how we keep everybody going. And everybody busy ... new ideas, you know, and all of that. And, and no, there's no telling how many different times we're doing, you know, to burn meat. But

Blake Smith 38:44

if folks aren't encouraged here, and all of that, I mean, one of the things that's captured me about it is, first, the willingness to just kind of constantly evaluate and if it doesn't work, don't be offended, just just move on and do something else. The other is to use resources that are already there. I mean, I hear congregations talk about, "well, we don't have the money to do that. We don't have this or we don't

have that," and you're taking the resources that you have, like opening the bathrooms for the parade groups. You know, and, and that kind of thing and just putting a table and a tent out on the on the prayer day and doesn't take a lot of action. But it's so important to the community. And I just I just appreciate that. And I would imagine that that would be encouraging to other congregations who feel like they don't have much.

Wayne Ellis 39:38

I'll share a little something if I have time with the blessings that the Lord's poured out on us. When we first began. We had we had witnessed to a woman that had two boys and a girl. They were teenagers ... a little less than teenagers. And she was a divorced lady hard worker. And she was attracted to our church by a friend. Well they began to come to church, and after a period of time, we baptized her and her kids. And she was a hard worker in the church. She brought probably more people to the church than anybody who's ever brought to the group. Well, one day, I tried to help her, and around her house to do things that she didn't have the money to do. And I went over there and one day and one of the boys I told him, I said, "I need to go to the bathroom." He said, "We don't have any water." And I said, "Uh oh," he said, "do you know how to flush your commode without water?" And I said, "No. I don't." So they had a bucket full of water in there. And they poured it in the commode. And this was the conditions in that home. And, while I was there, their Mom wasn't there. I noticed over in new comer, a Christmas tree, just a small Christmas tree. And it had one thing of lights on it and it was leaned up against the wall. And I stood there and looked at that and I wept whenever I left. [Yeah] The kids said, "Mr. Wayne, Mama said that she will get us a Christmas present when she got her income tax, that we weren't gonna be able to have Christmas. I was hurt as deep as I've ever been hurt. And I walked out of that house weeping all the way home. And I called our group together that they have started the group with us. We had six that were financially able to support the church. And as we were sitting at my table in my kitchen, and I said, "folks I have a problem" I said I visited Anita and the kids today to help her fix something. And those kids aren't gonna have any Christmas. I said I can't stand, I just don't, I'm hurt as deep as I've ever been." And I said, "Could we just have \$10 that we could give to each one of 'em, so that they can have Christmas. And one of the boys that was there in a group, and at that time, we just had a treasurer that had we've had a bank account but we just had a check book with and one of the girls they took care of the money. And he said, "do you know how much money we got?" I said, "no." And I said, "Bobby, how much money we got?" She looked in her purse, got the checkbook out, we had \$275 in the checking account. He said, "I vote we give it all." That's all the money we had in the group. And we sat there by the power of the Holy Spirit flooding our lives around that table. And, one that one, it went around that table and said, "I'll give... I vote to give it all. We took that money and Bobbie had carried those kids shopping, bought them some clothes and them a toy and got their mother a gift. We left \$5 in our bank account. And I can bear testimony to all of you that are listening, from that moment on, we have never been without money in our congregation. Never. We have always paid our bills. We borrowed \$65,000 from the World Church to buy that building. We paid that building off in 13 years, and it was financed at 15 years. We've never not been able to pay our light bill. We've never not been able to have money to whatever we do. But we gave it all. And we was willing to give everything that we had. And God's blessed us with that. And we're not rich. But we can do just about anything in our congregation that we want to do. We're redoing our church now from one end to the other, and we're almost finished, and we're gonna do a health approved kitchen, and we're gonna be able to do meals out of that health approved kitchen for the community that building there. God has granted us the

privilege to serve Him, because we was willing to give everything that we had. And he's blessed us because of that. We'd never worried about money, never. Don't have to. [What an incredible...] It's always ... always enough.

Blake Smith 45:59

That is an incredible testimony of sacrificial giving and, and the capacity of God's blessing for us. That's.... Oh, my gosh, I've got, I've got chill bumps, Wayne that, thank you so much for sharing that that testimony. And I hope that that too, will be encouraging to our listeners ... to remember that when we are sacrificial in our giving that God will take care of us and that God will bless us. And what, it just, I would imagine, for those of you who are listening, and I can't remember if Wayne said at the beginning, but if it's not clear, he is a seventy through and through, and getting to seventies at the table. I could just go and hear these stories all day. I want to, I do want to ask you, Wayne, what are your hopes for the Brewton congregation going forward?

Wayne Ellis 46:58

Well, I was touched this week with a sermon that you brought us at reunion. And I shared with you this morning, and it was a scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants 162. And it talks about us listening. And I was laid away last night. And that's all that I could hear in my ears. And I hope for the East Brewton congregation that we will always be willing to listen to what God wants us to do, and where he wants us to go. And I believe that if we do that, our church will continue to grow. As long as we listen to him. Not what we want to do, but what he wants us to do. And they are part of the community. And whatever we can be there. We've had to earn our identity in the community that we live in. They would not let our boys at church play in the church softball league because we didn't believe in Jesus. And, we had to suffer through things in our town like that. And we, I went to see the man that was over that league, and I knew him. And he told me, if you'll come back next year, you'll play softball." My boys didn't win a game. But at the end of the of the year, they gave a best Sportsmanship Award to one of the groups. Our boys won that sportsmanship award. And, we got a standing ovation in the people that was in the park for how our boys had acted. That's where God carried us. You know, and I fully believe if we continue, and in the community, we still have we still have faith believers there in the community that we live in that are not for us. You know, they won't let us participate in the Thanksgiving service as far as any preaching or anything like that. And but that's okay. That's okay. We're still gonna learn on place in other ways.

Blake Smith 49:44

If you had the Baptist minister come and ask for prayer, you're on the right path.

Wayne Ellis 49:48

We're gonna win. We're gonna win.

Blake Smith 49:51

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Wayne Ellis 49:53

And I want to just say you mentioned the seventy, I was ordained to that office of seventy in 1984. And I've been I've been in 70 that long in the church. My wife is also a seventy. So both of us ... it's hard for two seventys to live in the same house.

Blake Smith 50:15

It's hard to get a word in edgewise.

Wayne Ellis 50:18

It's, it's a, it's been a marvelous journey. Marvelous journey. You know and...

Blake Smith 50:26

That's great. And you shared your hopes for the Brewton congregation? Is it safe to say that probably your hopes for the Community of Christ in general are similar?

Wayne Ellis 50:35

Yeah. And it is and, you know, I'd like to say, as far as the church is concerned, the church has always been there for us, you know, they have always, they were willing to help us, you know. Time to time we have people that calls us, if any of the church people's in our area they come to see us, you know, they are have been supportive, the 30 years that we've been going as a family thing, you know, and so they have been nothing but good. You know, from a World Church. Steve Veazey has been in our building, and that with me and Betty, in that in that congregation a number of years ago, he wanted to come by and, and visit with us. And so he was, he sat in that building, and he knows what's there.

Blake Smith 51:37

Well, I just want I just have one more question. And that is, what do you see as the most urgent needs for the church today, as we as we try to move forward and be more inclusive, and listen.

Wayne Ellis 51:54

I have struggled in the last number of years when the condition that we've allowed ourselves to get in in the church with disagreements, misunderstandings, and the direction that the Lord has led today. And I have had people that just vocally ridicule the church, and just hard words and things. And I've been discouraged because of that, because I, I believe that God is in charge of what he would have us to do, I believe that we are The Restored Church, on this earth, and we have a responsibility to spread that gospel to everybody that we have the opportunity to do that to. And, and I just fully believe that, as long as we have our mind set on bickering, and arguing, and not being supportive, and those kinds of things, I don't believe we'll grow, I don't believe we'll be the church that we're supposed to be. We won't be the church that God established upon this earth, and play as placed within it his gospel. We won't be able to carry that out. And so I just would see that one of the things that I'd like to see the most of all is change of heart, and be willing to maybe if you don't agree, but be supportive, and, and move on in the church. And we've struggled in our area, whether it's some of the direction of the church with our people, we've lost, you know, and I really believe that what if we, those of us that have to chance, If we would have we would offer a positive testimony of what God has for us to do and what he's taught us to do, I believe we'd have a different church. When I go preach, somewhere, that's the message. And I, we are the church, I believe that. I joined this church because I believed and that's the gospel I preach.

You know, and I feel like God will take care of everything here. If I'm preaching what he wants me to do, if I'm teaching what he wants me to do, if I'm serving in the office of seventy the way he wants me to do, and I keep my eyes focused on the Lord Jesus, He will take care of everything else.

Blake Smith 54:54

Amen, brother. Amen. Well, is there anything you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked?

Wayne Ellis 55:01

No, because I'm tired... I'm sure these folks are tired of listening to me.

Blake Smith 55:06

I don't know about that. But Wayne, I so deeply appreciate you being willing to sit down. And it's just exciting to hear when congregations are looking at the positive side and willing to open their hearts and their doors and welcome in an in a truly welcoming fashion. And it sounds like East Brewton is doing that. I hope that it will be an encouragement to all. So thank you for being with us today.

Wayne Ellis 55:32

You're welcome. It's been a pleasure for me. And thank you

Blake Smith 55:35

And thank you to all of our listeners here at Project Zion Podcast. You've been listening to an episode of What's brewing. I'm Blake Smith, I've been your host and I've been here with Wayne Ellis. We hope that, going forward, if you'd like to hear more about what's brewing around the church, you can find it on projectzionpodcast.org. And you can always find Project Zion Podcast on all of your favorite servers. So we invite you to come back and join us for more and share us with others as you have a chance. Have a great day!