

Nice to Matcha | Matt Frizzell | Called to the Office of Apostle

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Robin Linkhart, Matt Frizzell

Robin Linkhart 00:31

Welcome to Nice to Matcha, a Project Zion Podcast series where we meet new people, leaders, movers and shakers, or all of the above. I'm your host, Robin Linkhart, and today I'm here with Matt Frizzell, who has been called to serve in Community of Christ Council of 12 Apostles. If that call is sustained in legislative session at the 2025 World Conference, Matt will be ordained during a worship service at that same conference. Matt, it is great to have you with us today.

Matt Frizzell 01:07

Hey, it's nice to connect again. Robin, thank you. I just want to take this chance to say thanks to you and Brittany and Carla and Blake and all the other people that make Project Zion happen. It's a really cool ministry, and it's a privilege to be a part of it.

Robin Linkhart 01:21

Well, thanks, Matt and you have been a guest with us before, lots of different topics, but today we're going to get to know you much better. So let's start with the basics. First, take a minute to introduce yourself to our listeners like you would if you're meeting somebody for the first time.

Matt Frizzell 01:38

Okay. Well, my name is Matt Frizzell. I grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Michigan church is where I kind of got to know Community of Christ and made me who I am in the church. I currently live in Chicago. This is the second time I've lived here. I first lived here from 2003 to 2011 when I was doing grad school work, and I came back because I wanted to be living in a place that made me happy, and Chicago makes me happy for lots of reasons, but that's its own podcast, and I will stop there. I am married to Margo Frizzell. She's a professional educator, and we have three daughters, Katie, who's 23, Kensley, who's 21, Kyla, who's 19. I first started working for the church in 1997 and I took a break to finish some theological studies, and ended up back working for the church again, and now I'm Human Resources Ministries Director for Community of Christ, and I do that job remotely. Oh, and I almost forgot June and Gus live with us. June and Gus are our two pets, or our fur machines, and they make sure we have plenty of fur around the house.

Robin Linkhart 02:52

Well, it's wonderful, and we have many people on the podcast that include their beloved pets in their family info. And I just love it when that happens. You touched on it just a smidge in your brief intro, but we really want to know all about your growing up story, like, where did you grow up? What was life like for you and your family, but also in your local community? Maybe tell us about your interest in hobbies. And we really want to know about where was God and faith in the mix of all of those formative years.

Matt Frizzell 03:27

Those are all really great questions, and it's hard to kind of navigate a clear path through all that, but I'll try. Like I said, I grew up in West Michigan, and that did have a really big influence on me. My dad's side of the family, since this is kind of church related, grew up long-time RLDS folks, and I have had generations before that serve the church in itinerant ministry. My mom's side of the family did not grow up RLDS at all, or Community of Christ at all. She was part of the large Dutch community that settled in West Michigan and that had an impact on my life that will show up later. My dad was a psychologist and my mom was a guidance counselor in public schools. So I used to joke that I'm the most maladjusted person I know. I had to learn how to identify my emotions and thoughts quite early and to be able to articulate them clearly so I could defend myself and my family. And I say that if in podcast world, I have a smirk on my face, but one of the things that is significant there is my parents. I say this sometimes, I was a normal kid of the 80s. My parents got divorced when I was 10. And, that actually had a huge impact on my life. When I talk about it with a depth of feeling that I can have, even after turning 50 this year, I would slow down and be pretty serious about it, and it was because my parents' divorce surrounded a great sense of emptiness that really characterized my childhood. There was emptiness before the divorce, through the divorce, through some unsuccessful second marriages with both my parents and we were kind of lost in the middle. Out of all that, and I don't think it's an overstatement to say that I grew up with a sense of emptiness and dysfunction, where I was a bit lost in it, and it was the 80s and 90s, and I had a lot of freedom, and so I was kind of had stuck, was left with that, and that was a big part of my spirituality. I had said that my mom's family kind of had an influence. I like to say that I made one of the most important theological decisions when I was 10 years old. One of the things that happened in my parents' divorce is that my mom's mom and dad, my grandma, grandpa, stepped in and played a huge role, kind of, in filling this void of parental figures and such. And my grandpa was a World War Two vet, and he loved me dearly. Loved me and my brother dearly, but they were from a different faith, and they were from a branch of Calvinism that really believed that people like us in the Community of Christ (RLDS) world were probably going to hell. And they didn't really push that upon me, but it was something they were concerned about. And there's a story I tell just to share it quickly here, but there's a story I would tell when I was 10, where my grandmother showed me the language in Revelations 22 where basically, if you add to the books of the Bible, all sorts of bad things happen to you, and if you take away words in the Bible, and all sorts of bad things happen to you. And she knew that Joseph Smith had altered the words of the Bible, and I went through kind of a long process where I was afraid of hell. I was afraid of the whole situation, but it didn't make sense to me without going in it more deeply, the long and short of it is I concluded that my grandma was wrong, and it was logically impossible for me to go to hell for something that I would even forgive myself for and God cannot be less loving than I would. And so it just didn't make sense. And so I tripped along, but that was a pretty important pivot point in my theological life that I didn't even know was theological thinking at the time. But, my grandparents, like introduced me to the things I love, like the outdoors, the

Great Lakes, the northern woods, chainsaws, chopping wood, camping, even hunting and fishing. I did all that with my grandfather, and those are still some of the things I love today. I enjoyed high school, despite all of it. It was kind of a real challenging time. I played football and baseball, so I had tons of fun, but I had this kind of cloud over my head, a sense of kind of existential lostness followed me around. It later was one of the reasons why I got Luke 15 tattooed on my arm, because I really needed a sense that God was chasing me down because I was lost and loved. But I got through that time, and I started attending camps. Spectacular, too, was a big influence on my life. There was a group of Michigan folks who really handled the whole basketball portion of SPEC for many, many, many years, couple of decades. And so I went to my first SPEC when I was 10 years old. It was 1983 and I was one of those SPEC brats running around collecting five cent cans, and actually pretty frustrated that they weren't 10 cent cans like they were in Michigan. Nevertheless, I was there at SPEC. It was at that time in my life where I really my spirituality deepened, and I started connecting with God for the first time.

Robin Linkhart 08:11

So where did you go to high school?

Matt Frizzell 08:14

That's an interesting question. I went to two different high schools. I spent four years in Catholic education. So I went to Catholic Central High School in downtown Grand Rapids for two years, but then I ended up graduating from East Kentwood High School, which was four times as big and in a suburb of the time. And anyway, that was a good time. Played football then for both of schools.

Robin Linkhart 08:35

Okay, so you graduate from high school, you're ready for whatever's next in the chapters of your life. So tell us about college, beyond career, family, and then, of course, we want to continue to hear about your faith journey and ministry, etc.

Matt Frizzell 08:53

Yeah. Well, there's different things speckled in in that I want to zigzag back to a testimony again. You know, to take the time to tell would take too long. But one of the life changing experiences that I had happened at one of my years at senior high camp. I had one of those moments that I really, to this day, can't explain. I can only testify of it and hope that the goodness of the story reaches the ears of the listener. I had a really powerful experience where I heard the voice of the Spirit speak to me actually through a friend of mine at a closing service. So it was in front of a lot of other people, which charged it even more. And he began saying things to me that even to this day, I kind of feel a little crack at my voice and my chest, talking about things that nobody really knew, which involved the discovery of my heritage in this tradition, my interest in the missionaries, in my family that had gone before me, and the opportunity that I would have to serve if I chose to. And even during that time, there were some words shared with me about how I would have the opportunity to serve the church if I chose to, in a time of real upheaval and change. And, all those things have come to fruition. I've kind of watched them evolve in front of me, and that moment has been a touchstone I go back to frequently to make sense out of the world I am in. But going back after that experience, I just was kind of trying to be a teenager, get things through life, and my next step in that moment, going back to the 90s, was to get an evangelist blessing. I still grew up in the church where you're approaching 18, you need to develop your own testimony, and

you probably should think about getting an evangelist blessing when we were still calling them patriarchal blessings, and my great granddad, John Grice, had given dozens and dozens and dozens of these things, so I needed to be able to do it too, to be a part of receiving one. Anyway, that happened at one of the World Conferences that I had attended in the priesthood room of the Stone Church. And, at the time that it was given to me, the temple was still under construction. And my evangelist blessing even talks about the symbolism of all of that, that while I'm having this really beautiful encounter with the evangelist, Varian Bowman and the in the shadow of this spire that was just being constructed. And there were some words in that blessing that were really specific for me in terms of just taking advantage of opportunities that would come along the normal flow of my education. I had planned to go to Michigan State. I had planned to become a psychologist or go into mental health or social work like my family, because it's what I knew. But the blessing ended up being kind of a pivot point for me to decide to go to Graceland. And, in many ways, I can see now back the providence of going to Spectacular as a way of paving the road for that. Because I had never really thought about going to Graceland. I went to Graceland. Richard Hawkes was campus minister. Paul Sears, then came right after that, for those people who know those names, and I was deeply involved in campus ministries all four years, but I didn't really fit well. I was also a chain smoker. I was not afraid of parties, but I was kind of over a lot of the teenage sex, drugs on rock and roll thing. And that was the 90s, in many ways, that was the 80s and 90s. That seemed to be all what youth ministry would talk about. So I was kind of living in two worlds at Graceland. I wasn't afraid to be in some of these places. Yet I didn't always participate in everything around me. Yet I wasn't afraid to participate at them. And yet I would love campus ministries. I don't think some people liked that, but that's that's old gossip a long time ago. But anyway, that was just part of my experience, and it was part of my trying to find my way. I met Steve and Kathy Veazey for the first time in a missionary training program that I did over a winter term. From that I went to Colorado for two summers, met you for the first time at one of those summers. I think it was up at Circle C campground, or it may have been in the in northern Colorado district at the time. And then I also spent a summer in Chicago with the Urban Ministry Center, and I think it was one of the first years Larry McGuire had come to work for the church, and I got to meet Larry. And this was all in the mid 90s, and that had an influence on just me responding to that call and my blessing to say, take advantage of All these opportunities. And I did. After graduating from Graceland with a degree in psychology, but also a lot of religion credits a minor plus, plus, I decided to go to seminary, and that really started a new step in my life and journey. I felt called to continue my theological work and my, answer some of the spiritual questions I had. I actually first went to Iliff School of Theology in Denver, but that's another story. I ended up with drawing and coming back here. It was just more of a learning and growing up and figuring out my limits. I was working full time and going to school full time, and I could see the wall coming. So I withdrew from school because I had bills to pay, and came back to Kansas City and then re-enrolled in St Paul School of Theology. And it was in the fall of 1997 when I met Gary Logan, and he hired me to be youth minister for Kansas City Stake, which was just beginning the process of becoming Midlands Mission Center. And so that was a very interesting time, but that was kind of my introduction to working for the church full time. Gary helped me get through seminary. Another wonderful thing happened in 1997. I married Margo. It was in the Stone Church. Again. That's another story I won't get into. Let me just say that they said they had air conditioning, but it was 101 degrees that day, and I was a grumpy groom in a tux, because of how hot it was inside the church. So, but anyway, that was, that was a real turning point in my life, both getting married and starting my work for the church and learning more about what it meant to be in full time ministry.

Robin Linkhart 14:58

That's fascinating. So I remember, because you were part of a team that was piloting the whole mission center concept and Midlands Mission Center, MMC. We were in the same apostolic field, I think, at that time, and the nickname for MMC was the Mickey Mouse Club. And I think I remember that I did not start that, I did not start that, but I think it's reflective of things, you know, as we change in the church. And here was this mission center trying something new, and everybody that was still in the old stake and district model, they're just kind of, "Well whatever," you know. So that was a real pioneering time, and you were right in the middle of that. That's amazing. So, I'm not sure exactly, that would be the time when you first went into full time ministry with Community of Christ. So, go ahead and take us through the rest of that journey. And I think some of your graduate studies, and I'll kind of take you in different ways along the way, but trace that for us and share about the different roles you've served in over the years, as a sustained minister and other roles.

Matt Frizzell 16:06

Yeah, actually, some of that kind of comes into what feels like the modern period where, you know, kind of making me the person I am today, and some of the experiences that led me here to this point in my life. I was finishing seminary and kind of making some decisions on what I wanted to specialize in. And, one of the things that always I would say drove my testimony was the church's talk about the cause of Zion, and then going to reunions and camps and realizing this must be it. I don't know how it can't be. This is a taste of that. It's the taste of something more. I think I'm not the, matter of fact, I know I'm not the only one who would go to some of these experiences where you prayerfully set aside time in your life to go be at a camp, be at a reunion, and prepare to just experience the joy, the liberating truth of God's community and the possibility of human relationships that just transcend the kind of stuff we do in the world, day to day. And I was just completely taken away by some of those experiences. And I had the privilege of growing up in a congregation, Union Avenue congregation in Grand Rapids, that really did not talk about salvation. We didn't talk about the one true church. Hardly at all. What I heard about is what people were doing on a day to day basis to build Zion in the communities in which they lived. That's what drove our testimonies at prayer and testimony service, that's what drove sermons. And so I was really blessed to know the other theologies out there in Community of Christ, nor the RLDS Church of the time. But I was really shaped and surrounded by these other, you know, visions of the kingdom of God. And so that's what I studied in seminary. And so after I finished my master's degree, and during that time, I finished my time as a youth minister, had some wonderful experiences helping to integrate Midlands Mission Center's youth ministry. Those are all interesting stories. But, you know, had a couple of summers of just huge camping programs with eight weeks of camps and all of that. It was exhausting, but it was very rich. I became a pastor at Highlands Community of Christ, which was itself a new experiment, another blending together of existing congregations, much like the blending together of stakes and districts to become mission centers and anyway, I learned a lot at Highlands that, again, has some of its own stories. I was able to experience growth there, not only personally, but to see the congregation grow by doing some intentional things that worked, and then see them become undone when we stopped doing those things, it was a lot of good learning in ministry. Saw how difficult it was for sometimes even good church folks who say they love each other, to get along and cooperate. You know, that was, that was a challenge in Midlands Mission Center. It was a challenge in Highlands Community of Christ, and it helped contribute to the sense of realism in my own ministry, that people

are people, and we're all kind of frail, fragile, broken creatures, doing the best we can, but also deeply aware that this vision for community was possible when we were intentional about it. I don't talk about this much, but I was offered the senior pastor position at Highlands when Bob Watkins moved to another position, and I turned it down to go to seminary. For those who are listening, I think this was a really important learned lesson at the time. Margo and I were still young in our marriage. It was 2003 at this time, and I was really aware that serving the church, especially full time at a congregation, was really hard on our marriage. And while there was no threats or fighting, I did get a sense that if I didn't make my family first, the church could break my loving relationship with Margo just because of the demands of ministry and the competition sometimes for time and the sense of commitment that is real and righteous. I mean, we need each other in the church. Ministry is important, but it's also takes a high level of stewardship. And so I combined kind of this moment of deep self-awareness. I think there was something a little prophetic about it, about realizing I just needed to pivot, and yet, at the same time, felt that this was an opportunity to continue my studies, so I was accepted to Chicago Theological Seminary, and in 2003 took off, quit working for the church. That was the first time I just kind of walked away from a sense of call to journey in a new, exciting way. There's a lot that could be said about moving to Chicago was our urban adventure. Kensley, my second daughter was just born. Katie was two. We were in the throes of being young parents. It was a huge adventure. I don't think we knew what the heck we were doing. We came here, ended up living in community with some other people. That's a whole nother discussion. But I think what's important is that Chicago Theological Seminary, in many ways, just deepened my sense of the cause of Zion. That wasn't the language we always use. There are other traditions that use that kind of talk, but really it was a matter of studying ethics, and specifically social justice, social ethics and peacemaking. And so that's what I spent my time studying. I learned to read the Bible through the eyes and the experiences of the poor and oppressed, and for the first time, fell in love with scripture in a way I had never before. Anybody who's been around me will hear me talk about how I watched Christianity weaponize scripture my whole life. It started when my grandma loved me so much, she wanted to save my soul, and she was not mean about it. I know that she shared with me the words of Revelation 22 because she loved me, even though it was a really frightening thing to tell a 10 year old, but that's the way I'd seen scripture used in so many different ways against people, to divide. And so, I went into seminary, kind of forcing myself to love scripture. I had my passages that I love, but it wasn't until I really got to Chicago Theological Seminary that I began to see the Bible as an incredibly liberative restoration story, and to this day, I think it's one of the most incredibly important narratives for us to recover and to tell about God's incredible love for the world, and ongoing spiritual work of restoring creation to its purpose. And that's the work of anybody who loves Jesus. And so I fell in love with that, and studied that more at seminary. Studied liberation theology. Studied a lot of post-modernity too. I could spin off into rabbit holes that would probably all we'd all glaze over, but I would be just enamored with, but I spent a lot of time with philosophical questions, but also a lot of those theological ethical projects, economic justice, racial justice, Gender Sexuality Studies, gotten sex at Graceland. Out of all that, you know, just had a lot of learning and fun with discovering new ways of understanding theology and the lived world, the world we live in, not the one that we fantasize about, the one we live in. And that really just changed my life. Theological education continued to deepen my sense of love for God's community on earth as it is in heaven, not in some heaven far away, and I also began to understand part of my love of philosophy also helped me see that our ideas are the way we see the world. Things aren't perceivable if you don't have the ideas in place to see them. Concrete example, I mean, the ancients looked up at the sun and saw a god in a fiery chariot

going across the sky. They didn't see fusion. Thank God. Science helps us see fusion, because that's what's happening in the sun. And how can two people look at the same thing and see two different things? Ideas? The way we see the world is determined by what we believe and understand that we know. And so theology ends up becoming a way of seeing the world in a new way, seeing it through the eyes of the God story, seeing it through the eyes of God's project for creation. And I wrote about this in the Herald. It's the idea of the Imago Dei being made in the image of God that lets me look at you, Robin and see not just another person, but my own likeness, because of the likeness that we share in God. It's ideas that affect how we see in theology. Help me see all that, helped me understand all that, and help me understand how simply talking about theology and doing theology well can be revelatory, because it helps people see things anew. So anyway, I took that with me into my work to return to ministry in Chicago in 2007 I wasn't quite finished with my PhD, but I was ready to come back to work for the church and met up with Ron Harmon and became Mission Center President Chicago, and that was part of my journey through finishing my doctoral studies. And then after finishing my doctoral studies, I had the wonderful opportunity to go serve at Graceland. Margo and I moved to Lamoni. We both ended up serving on faculty, and we were there for seven years. I was campus minister, taught religion classes, both graduate and undergraduate, and then became Dean of the seminary, and for a variety of reasons, in 2018 I ended up leaving that job. That its own story that was a real turning point, another point in my life where I felt very lost, but in many ways, the crux of it was I had to make a decision between family and career, and we had just adopted Kyla, and Kyla had a trauma history, and I knew that in order to really love her and be the family that we needed to be, that I couldn't continue to do some of the things that I was being asked to do as Dean as just professional pressures mounted, and anyway, I left that role and moved to Independence and became HR director, and that's where I've been serving since 2018. So, that's kind of the itinerary up to this point for all of your listeners who've had the patience to hear it.

Robin Linkhart 26:03

It's been a wonderful journey, and I love how you talk about your theological journey, your ongoing adventure with God, how it weaves through your life experience and your education and study and falling in love with scripture, just all weaves together and unfolds in ways that are really meaningful. And I'm just seeing this life that continues to be infused with light and opportunity to adjust how you see the world and how you speak up, this transformation along the way. It's a beautiful story. Matt, I want to take a sidebar for just a minute, and to some listeners, it may seem odd, but often, as full-time ministers, we can be so consumed by the doing of ministry and church life, and you've touched on that in your awareness of how that impacts your relationship with Margo and your family, that we neglect the being and the continuing need of our own souls. So I'm talking about our spiritual health and well being that's integrated into all these other balance of relationships. Matt, how do you nurture your relationship with God?

Matt Frizzell 27:16

That's a great question, and you're right. It's important for me to preface this whenever I talk about our family's journey with Kyla, our youngest. She's given me permission to talk about it freely, and we've talked about her trauma history being 11 when she joined our family, and the seven wonderful years we've spent together that were also a challenge. So, I mean, when I think about your question, I'm thinking not only of ministry, but yes, those family things that also get woven through into it. And you do

need to figure out ways to just self-care and nurture your own soul, and that becomes a refining process. It's a challenging question for me to answer, because I think there's a lot of different little things I do. There's not any one thing. I love music. I do play the piano, but mainly for myself. I'm not a great pianist, but I have worked out a lot of moments with God on the keyboard as I just made sounds speak in my relationship with the Spirit, and sometimes it's in frustrations, and sometimes it's in beautiful moments of loving sounds. But anyway, that's one of the ways I kind of self soothe and take care of myself. Another thing that I've really come to understand about myself later in life is I really agree with these people who talk about the sacredness of space, the vocation of geography in space, I cannot convey in words what it's like for me to walk into the cold water of one of the great lakes and just allow myself to be overcome by the coolness and the warmth and the vastness of the water. It's not uncommon for me to get into Lake Superior while it's, you know, 60 degrees of water, and for me to begin to cry at moments where I just need to feel at home. I've learned that I, one of the reasons why I live in Chicago is because I'm right next to Lake Michigan again. And I go up to the upper peninsula of Michigan a lot just to get away and to go be close to Lake Superior. I joke. You know, I know our bodies are 60 to 70% water, and my body seems to know that all of the water I drink comes from the Great Lakes, and so I feel at home when I get in, because that's where I came from, at least 60, 70% of me. So that's a really important way. I also love to work with my hands. So in covid, I bought a 50, I bought it cheap because it needed work, but I bought a 50 year old camper and renovated it, and learned a lot about that process. So I like, I like to restore things. I like to take old stuff and try to make them workable again. My camper project was part of that. Did a really long term, several year renovation on my camper. But I also love to ride motorcycles. I've had a motorcycle my whole life, until a couple years ago, and that's another way that I've been able to fly and feel free with the spirit and the wind, which in a soul recovering kind of way. I also love to read and write. I lose myself in a text. I lose myself in writing. And all those are really great things for my soul.

Robin Linkhart 30:24

Thanks for sharing all that with us, Matt. And, I think it's important for our listeners to hear the myriad ways that we can encounter God in our life, how we can make space for God, how we can liberate our souls to rest in that holy presence. So now we want to go right to the heart of what brings us here today in this conversation, and that is your call to the office of apostle. Tell us as much as you're comfortable sharing about that process, how it took place, and how you journeyed with that?

Matt Frizzell 31:02

That's a great question, and it's a vulnerable one. I think really, I learned the most about a sense of call early on, when I just kind of felt this summons, even as a young person, either at camp or my first conference, was the 1984 World Conference when women were called to the priesthood, passing of 156 so I have really early memories of that, but I also have spiritual experiences of that, witnessing the people on the rostrum speak with such conviction and power. The voice of Paul Booth, I don't even know what he was saying, but it still kind of echoes in my head, because those were childhood impressions. At the time, I had no idea, really what an apostle was or what they were doing, and I can't even confess to you that I ever felt the call to an apostle. That doesn't mean that I don't resonate with the call, but it's one thing to say this was right for me. I'm not sure that's the case, but I do know that as I've journeyed with it, this next step feels the right fit in my life, for the things that I've prepared to do I've spent most of my life for reasons I'm not really clear about, really trying to make sense out of what the

future of the church is. I remember at Graceland as we talked about Scripture and theology, I was so frustrated because I thought to myself, God cares about human relationships, not beliefs. Beliefs are great. You know, you heard me talk about them. Theology is the way we see the world. So I'm not saying we should throw them away, but I remember just at that time saying, What about human relationships? And so that that sense of calling kind of has integrated itself into my sense of calling it this time in my life, as I continued to journey with that, into trying to discern what is the church's role in the world that I live, in order to bring about the purposes of God in the world in which we live, what is the church's role? And I think that is one of the most pressing questions that we face, at least in the US church, and it's something that I feel very passionate about and given a lot of time and stewardship to. I don't have any crystal clear solutions for, but I do have a sense of vision and direction about that, and I'm excited to join with others who do also. The most important piece, though, is probably me reckoning with what the meaning of the word apostle means. I mean, as a theologian, I know that the word apostle in Greek means messenger. And in the end, while we have in the Community of Christ a tradition of a Council of 12 Apostles and reflection of the 12 tribes of Israel and all that narrative background, the call to be a messenger and a witness is one that I share with dozens and hundreds and 1000s of people who have entered the water baptism. And, that is what the call to being a messenger is about, to bear witness to the power of the story of Christ to transform the world and to put trust in the God that is calling us to believe in the ways of Jesus, to recover rebirth and restore the relationships around us. And so when I think about the call to this role at this time in my life, I'm motivated by that sense of sharing, of the call to be a messenger and witness with everybody around me, who's ever met the Christ, who's ever felt the spirit, whoever has been humbled by the presence of God. And that, I think, is the most important thing I carry with me now into this moment, as I try to make sense of this new journey in my life.

Robin Linkhart 34:51

Now I realize that you're still on the front end of this new chapter. How is this ongoing adventure with God changing things for you?

Matt Frizzell 35:01

It's funny. I was just on a phone call with my dad before this, and we were talking about something similar. In recent part of his life, he's made it a practice to write a daily prayer, and he talks about how that changes him, and it changes the nature of our discussion, and gives me a lot to think about. Part of the nature of prayer, as you know, is that prayer provides the opportunity to utter things that are kind of hard to share in conversation. And I think, as I think about how things are changing for me, my sense of calling and life's purpose is deepening in a new way. Being HR director for the last seven years, really, in many ways, my call has been to serve on the business side of the church. That's the primary responsibility. Even though I serve it as a minister, I have to work on the legal side. And when I say legal side, it just mean what the church means to exist as a legal entity, not necessarily around laws. In particular, though that's very important in HR, from everything from payroll to how we treat each other. And this sense of calling is realigning a sense of focus in my life back again in the areas of what really is the purpose of the church and the meaning of our witness, why we worship, and ultimately, what does it mean to really give our lives over to God and let that relationship change the very way we live our lives? We're facing a lot of challenges, and I guess I want us to have our eyes wide open about that we live, at least I, in the US. We, since the birth of phones, we have to be new stewards of our

attention. That's going to require a whole new set of spiritual practices that many of us are already trying to implement as we enter a political environment. We already have lived in a world where in the US, civility has ended in many ways, we attack each other, that's become acceptable in public discourse. We live in a world that talks about being an individual without necessarily emphasizing our interrelationships and common journey and common fate with everyone else. And, my sense of calling and journeying is to try to embrace that and understand who Jesus is in this emerging culture that seems tremendously chaotic to me and many others, and can be even very depressing and soul sucking for many. But what does it mean also to be a witness to community and to find those life giving, soul restoring relationships that Jesus really was always already about from the moment he began his ministry. That sense of mission, and I'm just kind of brushing over some things, obviously, I think part of my sense of journey and call is to look at the world as it is, and be realistic about what it means to be a follower of Jesus today, and someone who professes Jesus's community. And I see the cost being tremendous, but that is the testimony which we've chosen on earth as it is in heaven, Community of Christ, not community in some place far away, and that vision is really what's kind of drawing me in, in my prayer life, and in my sense of awareness about how we can engage realistically the world that we're in. And as you can imagine, I'm doing in the good company of many other people who are sharing the same concerns. But, there's a sense of sobriety about it, because of the challenges that we face, but there's also incredible witness and opportunity I see in all of it. If there's one thing that surprises me all the time is that the need for loving community is naked in our world. You don't have to go farther than your phone to see the need. And so I'm excited to see what the future can bring as we try to sail into it together with God.

Robin Linkhart 39:12

Well, I just want to dovetail into that excited about the future and ask, what are your hopes for Community of Christ into the future. And certainly, a lot of what you've shared today points to the hope that you have for the future. And how do you see God moving in the world? And then how does all of that connect with our movement and the heart of God's vision for all creation? And again, you've really touched on this in lots of ways, but tell us more about how you're looking at that and how you feel it.

Matt Frizzell 39:45

Your question takes me back to probably one of the most scary things that came out of that early experience I had at camp that I shared about. I just want to really honor and recognize I'm deep in my own experience here and trying to make sense of my own journey, but I think what I'm about to share will resonate with a lot of people. One of the things that I remember hearing from my encounter with the spirit back in 1989 at that camp was that I heard the words, "the call of the church is to proclaim and embody my love in and for the world. And, if it is not proclaiming and living out and embodying that love, then the church, to me, means nothing." That was the language that I heard from a voice that was sounding like the "I" person of the spirit. I still, to this day, can't explain it. It's still kind of, to be very perfectly honest and vulnerable in this moment, I spent years afraid of what that meant as a teenager, I remember writing about it in a journal, and what does this mean? It sounded scary. I learned later that prophetic voices speak in promise and warning all the time. The theology illuminated that for me, and it became less scary, but as a young person, those words were very scary for me, the call of the church during a time of turbulence and upheaval and searching for meaning and purpose and new life. The church's call was to proclaim and embrace my love in and for the world. And if it doesn't do that, it

means nothing. And those words really kind of anchor my sense of response. I'm challenged by those words. They're not mine. I get up and often remind myself with how good I've gotten in my life of privilege and education and employment to be effective and to focus on things that I can measure and set goals and be strategic and try to make a difference that way. I'm aware that none of that can necessarily touch the words that I heard, which is to proclaim the love of God and try to embrace it in some way so and live it. Those are the words that really are my hope for the future, because they resonate true for me, like Paul says in Romans eight for I'm convinced, and I'm convinced by those words, I don't think they speak authoritarian at me, or with kind of authority to speak down at me. I hear them as a beacon of light in the world. Our call is to live out what John talks about as the love of God, and that takes place everywhere when we let it. It can happen in moments, even across social media platforms. It can happen at camps. It can happen in phone conversations, on video calls, and those have life changing effects that endure and bless going forward and I That's my vision for the movement of the Spirit. That's how I understand the Spirit moving even in our movement, our little global Community of Christ. We connect because of those moments, and then we get together to remember them and to seek them again. And that, to me, is the life blood, the connective tissue, the Spirit's weaving of us into the heart of God's purposes for creation. And I haven't found anything else worth living for yet. That's it. It's better than anything else I've ever ran across.

Robin Linkhart 40:24

It's very compelling and it's inspiring. When I hear those words, I just want to get up and hallelujah. It's exciting and it's scary at the same time as you say. Amen, Matt, is there anything that you would like to share today, anything on your heart that I haven't asked you about?

Matt Frizzell 44:00

No, I just want to thank you for this time together. I think anything that's on my heart is just that. I hope others feel this sense of calling and light within them and just join me in a struggle to make it the center of our stewardship. I don't know about you, but I get distracted all the time, particularly as I'm going back now, I'm going to date this podcast, but the Democratic National Convention is happening down the street for 2024 where I'm talking to you from, and so I'm reminded of just the climate that exists for the next few months. And it's easy to get distracted. It's easy to get lost. But in reality, no matter what happens, the calling of the gospel to live in life-giving, loving community with others. It knows no party, knows no bounds, knows no culture. It can be found in any and in all those places. And so my hope is that we all continue to make it the center of what we know and do. And. Let it be so

Robin Linkhart 45:02

well. Matt, thank you so much for making time to be with us today. What you've shared, I know, will inspire all of our listeners and getting to know you better as you step out into this new adventure with God is a privilege and a blessing to us. So thanks so much. Matt,

Matt Frizzell 45:18

thank you, Robin. It's wonderful to call your friend. If you would

Robin Linkhart 45:22

like to hear more from Matt. Check out. Episode one by two, entitled Zion. He talked about Zion today. Episode 174 taking scripture out of context. Episode 181 authority, Jesus and the Bible. Episode 203, a prophetic people. Episode 229, an inspiring episode called sinner center. Episode 279, peace, justice and the role of conflict. Episode 315, Jesus, the peaceful one and episode 374, about conflict. 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, you.