

What's Brewing | Combined Reunion in the Northwest | Part 1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

reunion, Samish Island, Canada West, Inland West, Greater Pacific Northwest, tradition, cultural differences, community, evaluation, international reunion, theological depth

SPEAKERS

Lisa Stecher, Shannon McAdam, Robin Linkhart, Blake Smith, Chris Phelps, John VanDerWalker

Blake Smith 00:28

Hey, Project Zion podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, Project Manager for Project Zion Podcast. The episode you are about to hear is part one of a two-part interview between host Robin Linkhart and a group of guests from the Inland West, Greater Pacific Northwest and Canada West mission centers. We hope you enjoy.

Robin Linkhart 00:49

Hello and welcome to What's Brewing, a Project Zion Podcast series where we explore the question, what is mission and why does it matter? I'm your host, Robin Linkhart, and I'm here today with Community of Christ ministers and leaders, Shannon McAdam, John VanDerWalker, Chris Phelps and Lisa Stecher to talk about their exciting journey combining two reunion traditions into one collaborative effort at Samish Island campground, Shannon, John, Chris and Lisa, hello and thank you so much for making time to chat with us today.

Chris Phelps 01:31

Hi,

Shannon McAdam 01:33

Thanks, Robin.

John VanDerWalker 01:34

Hello,

Lisa Stecher 01:35

Hi Robin

Robin Linkhart 01:37

Well, let's take a few minutes now for introductions. So please tell us just a little bit about you and your various ministry roles in your specific mission center. Shannon,

Shannon McAdam 01:50

Thanks, Robin. My name is Shannon McAdam. I'm an elder in Community of Christ. I'm part of the volunteer Mission Center President team in Canada West. And as part of my role, I help with lot of different things. We have several people on our team who split up the Mission Center President responsibilities. I also attend the Vancouver congregation in British Columbia.

Robin Linkhart 02:18

Thank you. Shannon. John?

John VanDerWalker 02:21

Hi. My name is John VanDerWalker. I'm the Mission Center President for inland West Mission Center. I've been a full-time minister for Community of Christ since 1999 I've served in various ways, on six camp ground boards. I've overseen three camping programs for mission centers, and I was privileged to spend three years managing the Samish Island campground. I have a little experience with camping, and really appreciate the volunteer leadership that we have in the church.

Robin Linkhart 02:55

Thank you, John, Chris, let's hear from you.

Chris Phelps 02:58

Hi, I'm Chris Phelps. I'm the former pastor of the Vancouver congregation in Canada and the volunteer organizer director of the BC [British Columbia] reunion for 15 years. So I've recently stepped down from that, and new people get to take it on next year. I'm also on the Samish Island board, and yeah, John and I came up with this idea, so we're going to move forward with it.

Robin Linkhart 03:25

And last, but certainly not least, Lisa,

Lisa Stecher 03:28

Hi, I'm Lisa Stecher, and I am a priest in the Spokane Valley Community of Christ. And I have directed the inland West reunion a couple years, and co-directed this year for the combined reunion, and co-directing again next year for our inland West, Canadian West reunion.

Robin Linkhart 03:52

Thank you so much, Lisa. So, in 2023 inland West Mission Center and Canada West Mission Center BC held their first combined reunion this this summer in 2024 my two grandchildren and I were blessed to attend your second combined reunion. Today, we want to hear all about that journey. So, first of all, how was the idea born and what brought you to exploring the possibility, John, you want to start off with that story?

John VanDerWalker 04:29

Sure. This idea has been kicking around for quite a few years, and when I was serving as the manager of the Samish Island campground, I got to experience the reunions of three camps, three mission centers. It was a quite an experience, and I really enjoyed being able to course through in my daily

duties the Canada West Mission Center's reunion when I came back to Inland West as a mission center president, I saw that there was a need for us to energize the inland West reunion and I saw that it seemed like Canada West would be a natural fit for us to combine with and since it had been kicking around for a while, I contacted the mission center leadership to see if it was okay to approach this. They gave us the green light, as well, as did our respective apostles. And so, Chris and I began working together to combine these two reunions. I did this for a couple reasons. One was, I thought that it would be good for our Mission Center, to have a broader exposure to other parts of the church, basically Canada West. And also, I saw, and was concerned about the financial stability of the campground, and how our small reunion of about 35 to 50 people was taking a week when we could generate more income for the campground during that week if we were to combine and open up a week for another group to use. So we netted a profit for the campground by doing this by opening up a week, and we also provided a revitalization of our reunion experience.

Robin Linkhart 06:30

Thanks, John. Now let's hear about how things were going for Canada West BC reunion folks. How did you all receive the invitation to explore combining. And how did you come to your decision to say, "Well, okay, let's give it a try"? Chris, you want to start with that?

Chris Phelps 06:48

Sure, I can talk a little bit about that. So, John and I have been talking about this. This is pre-covid, pre-pandemic, and we both thought it was a good idea. It took a little bit of time through shutdowns and all those other things to come. But when we came back together, and we were having a reunion in 2022, John and I started talking about it again, and we raised this at reunion, uh, tried to talk about it pretty broadly. Had a couple of meetings where we invited everybody to come and share their input. There were some concerns. Our reunion is in Canada West. It's West Coast. It's a little bit, little bit loose and we like the the looseness of it all. We didn't want to lose the flavor of what we created. But people were open to the idea. And we kept hearing from everyone we talked to, "oh, inland West would be a good fit. I don't think that'd be a real problem. I don't think you're going to run into big cultural problems." So, we said, "well, let's try it." And in the conversation John and I had, we said, this is an experiment. We'll see how it goes and evaluate at the end of the first one, evaluate at the end of the second one. We both thought, for it to really work, it would take five years, and for it to really conjoin, it's going to take five years, but the first two years have been a good experience, and we're going to keep going from here.

Robin Linkhart 08:20

Shannon from someone who sits in a mission center president seat, how, how was all of that unfolding for you and your team?

Shannon McAdam 08:30

What I love is just how kind of grassroots led this was, with John and Chris kind of taking on the discussions and really meeting and thoroughly discussing it, so that by the time they kind of brought the proposal to our mission center president team, we felt really confident in the work that they'd already done around sort of discerning this and seeing, would it be a good fit. Having been in those conversations, we all love Samish Island and want to make sure that it's, you know, sustained, and in

Canada west we have a really geographically large mission center, so we cover four provinces, and this reunion is mostly attended just by Canada West Mission folks on the West Coast. And we have another family camp that happens at the Hills of Peace campground in northern Alberta, and so sustaining two reunions every summer is made a lot easier by being able to combine resources with another mission center. And I will say there were people sometimes, perhaps myself included, about the some of the cultural differences between Canadians and Americans, and how would we make that fit? But kind of guiding the way was the fact that we've been doing shared youth camps at Samish island for years. Some of my best church friends are from inland West and GPNW, and so those probably, I don't know, since my mother was young, we've been sharing youth camps at Samish. And so what was most joyous for me was seeing people I knew from camps growing up at reunion for the first time, who had been in different mission centers. So while there was some trepidation, there was also a lot of excitement about the possibility, and that groundwork had been laid for many years, I think served us well,

Robin Linkhart 10:33

Great. Okay, so I really want to kind of take it from the very beginning, so we can hear the story of how this unfolded, because I know there are lots of different layers to this, so both groups have decided to give it a whirl. So tell us how you navigated things on both sides to make that happen in 2023. And Chris, as you have said, it was like, Okay, let's do this one year, see how it goes, then we'll kind of take it from there. You know, we're not going to sign the contract for long term, until we have a chance to kind of explore it. So Chris, why don't you start off telling us how this kind of unfolded from the beginning, once you decide you're going to do it?

Chris Phelps 11:18

Well, let me just give one bit of background before we get there, one of the nice things that made this, I think, more possible is, several years ago, Canada West stopped being the Canada West reunion, and we've had a number of Americans and people from other places invited to come to reunion, and have chosen to come to our reunion with us. So, it's not just been a geographical reunion for Canada West and I think that made it a little bit more natural to open up to Inland West as well. Once we decided, John and I had a number of discussions and we started planning really early. And I'll say there was always some trepidation as to what the really important things for each camp would be, so you don't want to lose those really important things and sometimes it's hard to decide as individuals what those really important things are, I know for BC that we would never want to lose having the talent show on Thursday night, because those are traditions that go back to the 70s and that are sort of sacrosanct. But there's a lot of things that you had to combine the way that we do the schedules and the way that we did the worships and who was going to do things. So, we really tried to figure out where we were going to go with the programming and how we were going to work the schedule to make it comfortable for people. One of the things that we really focused on was, that first weekend doing, because we start our reunion on Saturday, and spending the weekend doing things that brought the two groups together. So we we had a story and song service on Sunday evening, which was about how sharing stories about Samish island. So we've got two different groups and different people who all have stories about this one sacred space, and they can share their love and their knowledge and their excitement about being in this one place together, and hearing other people's stories made that more real. The communion service in the morning on Sunday, was run by John and Shannon, I believe, and brought

that, that sacramental aspect, into things. So, we started to look at that weekend as being a time to get to know one another, and then figured by the time we get to Monday, things will sort of smoothed out, and we'll have classes and a little normal activities going. People will mix a little more, gradually and naturally, and we'll see how it goes. It didn't work exactly the way we thought it might. I won't say everything flowed as perfectly and smoothly as we wanted, but it was a it was a good first first kick at the can and we learned a lot that first year. So started planning early and tried to mix things. That's where we got to.

Robin Linkhart 14:36

So John, tell us how it was on inland West side that first year as you're beginning to navigate and plan.

John VanDerWalker 14:44

So, I kind of look at the, this experiment kind of like dating. We haven't decided to get married yet, but we're still, we still like each other, and we really want to get to know each other better. So, it was a kind of a, "well, let's, let's put this together in a in a benign habitat where we can see who can bring what to the table." and Chris was really good to work with. The, one of the things that Canada West prides themselves on is that they are pretty laid back, and they really are. And that was kind of hard for some of us. We made some mistakes the first year. One of them was that we assigned specific services to each mission center, and that didn't really work, you know, where we tried to just showcase stuff from our, you know, ministry from our Mission Center and Canada West did the same with theirs. That seemed like we were two separate groups. And Chris pointed that out to me, that you know, this isn't really working. So we abandoned that the second year. And I've actually been privileged to see congregations, two congregations combined into one congregation. And the best way for that to happen is an organic experience, and I believe that's what we've been creating with our combined reunion. Is that this year, people, we ask people to be in charge of worship services and classes and what not, but because of last year's experience, we were able to start seeing the inherent talents and skills of folks from outside of our own mission centers, and we were able to tap those skills, and it kind of blended together naturally. So, the dating metaphor continues on. As we get to know each other better, we start to depend on each other more. And I feel like our experiment is going well. We did hit some rough spots. There's, it's inevitable, and, but we've persevered through that, and I think we're building a fairly solid form of reunion ministry. I'd like to mention too, and that's something that Chris brought up just in what he just said, is that Canada West has always had folks from GPNW especially coming to their, and that's Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center to their reunion, because Inland West is now involved in this reunion. We have, actually more people coming from other mission centers too. We have folks coming from Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center that did not come before, because Inland West is there, and there's ties to us outside of our mission center. So that was really exciting to see these new people coming in and being able to engage, and I like it because I just really love to see my friends from Canada West once a year in a really intimate way.

Robin Linkhart 18:06

So, Shannon, how was it from your seat in 2023 as folks were preparing and then living into that?

Shannon McAdam 18:15

What I loved was John reached out to me really early on with this idea for a communion service that would ground us in the sacraments and bring us together as one body, using the communion emblems as like a sign and a symbol, that shared bread to bring us together in one kind of body of people. And I really appreciated him leading the way on that. And so, we worked together, and sort of like literally set the table together, that communion service, and had servers from both mission centers, tried to make things, you know, as diverse as possible. And I think leading the way in that was really helpful. The other thing that I personally tried to do as a mission center president was like, I know the people from Canada West quite well. I didn't know the folks in Inland West, and so I tried to set an example by sitting with someone I didn't know at meals and reaching out to people I didn't know, which has been delightful. I feel like I have all of these new friends in Inland West, and I think by doing that, it helped me be able to say to people who might be a little more uncomfortable with it, or asking questions to be like, "but have you met so and so? Have you sat down with so and so to have a meal, because I think you'll find once you actually sit and you know, have share a food, share a story with folks? You'll see we have more in common than we realized.

Robin Linkhart 19:57

Thanks. So, Lisa, I know you have been very active in Inland West Mission Center when it comes to reunion at Samish Island. What was your experience as Inland West joined up with Canada West in 2023?

Lisa Stecher 20:14

it was such an amazing experience. And for our family, it was the first time we were bringing our twin granddaughters, and I it had probably been, you know, 20 plus years since I had brought someone so little to camp. They were just turned six, and so I was a little hesitant on how I was going to keep up and in our reunion had dwindled in size. Everyone had a large amount of jobs. That was one of the things that I had heard, you know, directing camps prior to this, is, "I'm exhausted when I leave camp." I'm doing so many jobs because there's so little people there, and that's what really drove myself, really wanting to make sure everyone had a joyful, peaceful experience, and didn't leave going, "Gosh, I just worked the whole week, and I don't even remember what guest ministry was doing, you know, or any of the services, because I was too busy cleaning." And so, to bring our grandkids there and see the schedule, and it was so refreshing to have a schedule that really fostered families. And what I mean is their campfire service was before the evening service, so those that had small children could go to bed, you know? And where we had stepped with the tradition of, "we're going to have our evening service, and then we're going to go to campfire." Well, then we were so small. Our campfire was getting small and smaller, and so the participation wasn't there. And so, to go to our first campfire and have so many people there and lift their voices and carried over the bay there was just so amazing. And then to watch these tiny little girls, eyes huge, envisioning all that was going on and being so loved, it was quite relaxing. And that schedule, I just came back with the need to invite those that had been tired and had dwindled and not come to reunion to make sure they understood how relaxing, how restful, and combining our reunions was just really filled my bucket for our whole family. And so then, during, our granddaughters this year, they knew what was going on, and so they kept telling everyone else exactly what was going on. And so, you just see those seeds planted when you start bringing your grandchildren. And so there were some things that it definitely felt like we were being trying to figure out where to be led, because it didn't feel like, you know, the schedule was all new. It was very different,

even though we had aspects of sentiment that we've always done there just the change that it at times felt like we were, you know, following versus commingling. You know, you talk about interactive play or parallel play. We were just kind of like paralleling and following and so, but I'm one that always takes, you know, first year you're learning, second year implementing, and third year you're finally getting your groove. So I'm glad we got a five-year plan of everyone getting our groove, because the first year was great, the second year was even more amazing, and I'm excited for the third year.

Robin Linkhart 23:54

Thanks. So, we've touched on this a bit already, but I want to just dig a little bit deeper into what some of the challenges were that first year of combining. Who wants to talk about that?

Chris Phelps 24:09

I can or Shannon, [Shannon: go ahead, Chris] Okay. I think, I think there were moments in planning the first year where we didn't really know. We kind of had an idea what we wanted to accomplish, in, in bringing everyone together, in having these shared experiences and having other everybody understand that we were more alike than we were different, and that some of the differences were just fun, not important. But sometimes we didn't really know what to focus on. And I remember having one of these zoom meetings, talking with John, and we were going back and forth, and we were laughing and having a good time. Trying to figure out what the really important stuff was. And, and I came away from the meeting thinking, I don't know what's important to Inland West and, and, you know, no offense John, but sometimes you're a crotchety old man, as am I. So, we got two crotchety old men going, well, this is our way of doing things. And, you know, but I couldn't get this is the really important stuff out of John., But we were still laughing and having a good time. And the upside of that meeting was my daughter was sitting in in the living room while we were having that conversation, and afterwards, she said, "You guys work really well together, it's all going to be fine." And I thought, "Oh, well, if that's what she's hearing, and she's 13 at the time, if that's, if that's the story that she's picking up out of this conversation where I'm going, I want more information. I want concrete. I want something specific, then I think we'll be fine." It's just going to be a process to work through and to get there. So it was, it was challenging figuring out what was important to the different groups, and it was challenging to see where things were going to end up. But I think we had a sense that it was going to end up.

Robin Linkhart 26:18

Well, thanks. Chris. Shannon, did you have something?

Shannon McAdam 26:23

Yeah, mine is, my reflection is just a little bit simple in terms of that first year. I found myself feeling like, oh, I had these ideas of comfort around reunion of the people. I know the way we do things, and I felt like I was being pushed out of my comfort zone in a place where I've always felt really safe and things are the same, and it's very like there's a certain, I don't know, like a spiritual comfort there, but I realized as I kind of, as the week went on, that I was actually feeding myself in my spirit in new ways that I hadn't done at reunion in a long time, that from that safe container, I could actually meet new people who might have different political views than me, or different like more life experiences than me, different church experiences than me, and that instead of it, instead of those things making it an uncomfortable or unsafe space, it actually was kind of the opposite, that the safe container that I knew

already existed allowed for me to encounter new people and new ideas and new ways of doing things in a really beautiful way. And so, by the second year, I was really excited to, like, have lunch with my old friends that if I had only met the year before, but because of those stories we shared. And I think a lot of people, if you've been to reunion before or a family camp, the intimacy that's created when you're eating together and working together and worshipping together and praying together is really quite profound, and you can create quite strong bonds with people in a short amount of time. And so, I found allowing myself to let those bonds of community carry me meant I was able to leave that comfort zone more comfortably.

Robin Linkhart 28:27

Mm, that's beautiful, John, how about challenges you've encountered?

John VanDerWalker 28:34

So, one thing for listeners to understand is that the Canada West contingent of reunion goers is over twice the size of Inland West's reunion goers. So, we have an inequality of numbers on the ground. And the first year that was kind of an evident thing, because, you know, birds of a feather flock together. Well, that's true about people. And so, we had kind of these different things. And one of the challenges that we, that we looked at, and that we actually had to face, was cliques. It's especially evident among the teenagers. We've tried to put into place some things in the second year to address those things. And it's not one group or the other, it's just the way humans are. One of the things that I really appreciated that helped get through the some of the difficulties, was the theological depth that is existent in both of the mission centers and I'd like to just say that Shannon kind of exemplifies that when she talked about the communion service that we did together, it was really easy for her and I to do that together without a whole lot of, you know, back and forth when we didn't, we didn't talk as much about the services. You know, some might think we should, because we were talking the same language, and her depth, which is extensive, really did serve the reunion well. So we have that in our lay ministry, we have it in the, in the professionals that are there. So, the challenges were there, the difference in sizes. We're both democratic societies, US and Canada, but we do it differently and we're both, well, I would say Canada is pretty aware of what's happening in the US and in the US, typical us, we have our head in the sand. But about Canada, although I don't, because I do listen to Canadian public radio and I understand when they call for elections, and how that I was there once when they called for an election, I'm, holy cow, this is cool. So, there were some of those differences, there's cultural differences, but we were able to come through that, and then actually, like Chris and I did when we were, before we were even on camera, we were making jokes about with each other. So, it's, the challenges were there no doubt, but we have have worked through them in a spirit of desire to be one together and so, and I really appreciate, like I said, the theological depth that's helped with that.

Robin Linkhart 31:40

Thanks. John, Lisa, what was a challenge or two that you experienced that first combined reunion?

Lisa Stecher 31:47

A lot of it was like you said, we were small in numbers and with that, we had come from a place that we just worked so hard that and it felt like we were just being like, step back and be fed. And so it came across as, "Well. What do you what do you want to do? What are your traditions? What are you?" And

we were just being fed. We were just in a moment of enjoying being in a large body of people that have the same sacraments and beliefs and desires of reunion coming and communally living, and to step in and work where you needed to be. You know you saw work needed, but just to participate and, with that, we were looking for more directions. We were looking for more schedules and announcement of what that schedule was, because it was all new to us. So, we had a lot of bull, you know, wandering around going, what are we now? I'm not understanding. And then with that, we had some miscommunication with our youth and our young adults, and it did feel like in some places, that they were being excluded. And by no means is that anything that Community of Christ in any youth camp or reunion or SPEC or, you know, World Conference, do we that's not our outcome? It was just lack of communication, of knowing what was happening next. It was like, "Oh, if you know, you know," but we don't know. And so, towards the end of the week, we were working out some of those rough points. But one of the traditions that we had started with the older youth and young adults was walking out to the point by moonlight. And none of the Canadian youth had ever done that like, "we can walk to the water in the dark with permission?" And, we walked out there with our guest ministry. It was Art, and we had, like, 32 of us. I had to count heads when we left and kids when we came back, to make sure that everyone returned. And it was a beautiful full moon, and so it was so bright and lit up, and everyone's taking group pictures and just listening to the waves. And then we told a little kids bedtime story, it'll be okay. And it was such a wonderful moment to wrap up the week and realize it'll be okay. We have come together. We know who is guiding us, the Spirit is guiding us, God is guiding us, and it just reaffirmed, yes, we want to do this again. We met the neighbors. We like the neighbors. We have things in common and, and it just really planted the seed, that little final service there and the invitation went out, and everyone was excited for the next year to come, you know, so...

Robin Linkhart 35:13

Thank you. That's a beautiful high point experience. I could just see that in my mind's eye. So the the rest of you, what was a high point for you? Chris?

Chris Phelps 35:30

I had lots of high points. The, I mentioned the story, and so I'm service earlier, that was one of those moments where I thought a lot of pieces came together really, really well. But one of the biggest things was we have a tradition of a lot of music, a ton of music, through our reunion experience, and I seeing hearing, hearing the extra voices added to the mix. So being 150 instead of 100 makes a big difference. And seeing the excitement about the music that was an unexpected joy. I think was was huge. So that was, that was very fun. Yeah, I'd say that was one of the biggest highlights. And

Robin Linkhart 36:20

Shannon, how about you? A highlight for you in 2023?

Shannon McAdam 36:28

Standing across that communion table from John and preparing those elements together to feed our people that were both of our people, and a way to bring them together that, like it kind of brings tears to my eyes in this moment, even just to think about that.

Robin Linkhart 36:46

And John a high point from you?

John VanDerWalker 36:50

I have to share Shannon's. You know the table, the table is the center of of Christian faith. And it was, it was such an honor to serve with her, and it was, it was like they taught. I mean, it was international. And I promote this reunion as an international reunion. I don't know if there are other ones in the church, but ours, truly, is an international reunion, and those, those lines are blurred, and Chris came up with a brilliant idea that we're, you know, we have a flagpole on our campground, and a lot of people fly their national flag when they're there. We chose a rainbow flag that all are welcome here and and that we can unite under this kind of all-inclusive community. And so, the table represented that for me too. Thank you. Shannon.

Robin Linkhart 37:56

Well, this has been a wonderful story of how the the idea the imagination of combining reunions just emerged. It sounded like it was very organic, how you journeyed the way together to launch that first experience and the mix of both challenges and beautiful moments, spirit filled, moments of positive so now I want to ask, How and when did you decide to do it for another year? To say, Yes, this was good. Let's, let's do it again. John?

John VanDerWalker 38:35

So, a little bit of context. Um, Samish campground serves three mission centers: Inland West, Canada West and Greater Pacific Northwest. And so, each one of those mission centers has what's called a caucus, and that caucus elects people to the Board of Directors for the management direction of the campground. We have a caucus meeting during our reunion, because that's the one time that the people that are associated with the campground are there together in one place. So, Chris and I talked about it. I talked about it with, we talked about the between mission center presidents that we would that I was planning on having a straw poll during our caucus meeting of that first reunion, and it was a non-binding vote, because the mission center president and the apostle actually have the authority to do this kind of stuff without having the body participate. But we wanted to have a feel for how the people thought our reunion was going. So, we agreed that we would have a straw poll at our caucus meeting about, "how is this reunion going, and do you want to do it again next year?" I think the leadership had already decided we wanted to try to go ahead for a second year, but we really wanted to have the input of the people. And my caucus meeting, while there was some discussion, it wasn't negative. There was no negative at all, and it was overwhelmingly in favor of, in fact, I believe it was unanimous in favor of continuing a combined reunion with Canada west. So, even though Chris and I and Shannon and the other mission center presidents in Canada West had talked about this and that we wanted to try to go a second year, we really did put it into the lap of the community and asked them, so that's how we proceeded.

Robin Linkhart 40:49

Shannon, how was it for you on your side of things?

Shannon McAdam 40:54

Yeah, I'm actually not the person on the mission center president team that does the campground caucus. It's one of the shared leadership, things we have, but yeah, Gwen, she made sure that we did very, something very similar when we had our caucus meeting, take a straw poll of folks understanding, not a binding vote. And from what I understand, there was a lot of support, some concerns, but none that like held back the majority of people from saying, No this is something we want to keep going. And one of the pieces of feedback we heard was similar to what Lisa was saying, of feeling like, oh, with more people there's actually we share the load of work. We share the responsibility for different that kind of work side of Camp more broadly, and there was definitely a big openness to that, to feeling more energized. And it's great to take those polls at the end of the week when people have felt had felt like, "Oh, this is a little bit more easeful, maybe, than in previous years.

Robin Linkhart 41:57

Chris, do you have anything to add to that process of deciding to do it again.

Chris Phelps 42:02

I just the, at the end of the week in one in the last afternoon, so it would have been Friday afternoon, we also had a combined gathering of anybody who wanted to express feedback, talk about the following year, sort of give input into pros and cons on combining and carrying on with that. And we, I think, had a very honest conversation, and there were a couple of problem spots, and there was a, some acknowledgement that there had been some communication errors, and some problems along those lines. We checked in with the cooks, because the cooks are now cooking for an extra 50 people. That's a big, that's a big ask, so we made sure that they were, they were part of that conversation as well. And the overwhelming response was, yeah, let's try it again and not commit for 50 years. But that's, carry forward and see how this goes and, lo and behold, that's what we did.

Robin Linkhart 43:07

So, Lisa, I know at some point, and I'm not sure when it happened, if you volunteered, or you were invited, but at some point you were invited to, or you said yes to be a director for 2024 so was that part of this conversation, as we were looking to the next year to do this together before you left the campground? When did that emerge?

Lisa Stecher 43:36

So, what Chris was saying, we had, we had met out under the tree, those that want to participate, and gave feedback, and I really appreciated that, because it was honest, and everyone was accepting of our honesty. There was not any pointing fingers or getting defensive. It was just like we can be transparent and talk about our woes and know that we're going to be accepted and that we're going to be loved, and even after, you know, airing things that we thought could be better and ideas on how we could improve that, that group unanimously wanted to do it again and, and I was part of that group, but I didn't instantly, I went to I was on the Samish board, and we had an in-person caucus meeting in September. And as we were heading over to their past, over the past, and thinking about reunions and experiences and how much, you know, being part of this campground, in this sacred place, I think it was, we got there Friday night, and I think I walked up to John Vanderwalker and said, "Hey, I want to co-direct reunion." And he goes, "Great, you have the job." I was like, I knew that's what I want. And to

participate and be part of and I have a wonderful supporting Mission Center. And they said, Great, thanks. We appreciate that. So, then Chris and I started talking...

John VanDerWalker 45:10

And, I'd like to interject that Lisa has got experience with director and reunion before, so her, her movement into that position was a natural, natural one.

Robin Linkhart 45:21

Yeah, that's for sure.

Blake Smith 45:24

You've been listening to an episode in the project Zion podcast series, What's Brewing? This was part one of a two-part series. Watch for part two to post next week.

Robin Linkhart 45:35

As always, a very special thanks to 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.