

What's Brewing | Combined Reunion | Part 2

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Reunion, traditions, Samish Island, family, communication, climate emergency, dance party, fly fishing, vibrant ministry, extended grace, Spirit-led planning

SPEAKERS

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

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 two of an interview between host Robin Linkhart and a group of guests from the inland West, Greater Pacific Northwest, and Canada West Mission Centers. If you missed part one and would like to start from the beginning, you can find part one, which is episode 766, at projectzionpodcast.org or on your favorite podcast platform. Enjoy.

Robin Linkhart 01:01

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. Okay, so that's a great dovetail into beginning to talk about 2024. So, Lisa, that's September, 2023 when you volunteer. And now I want to hear from you and Chris, you know, how was planning the second time around, different than the first. Just tell us as much as you're willing to share with us. And whoever wants to start, you guys just take it back and forth until you tell us the story.

Lisa Stecher 02:07

Chris is sitting back letting me start. This year, we had a lot of things going on in our own family structure. We had multiple generations of our family living together in our home. And so going into reunion, knowing that Chris is so experienced and has so much knowledge, my biggest struggle was I have a really tough time putting faces to names, and I'd only met people you know for one week, and then the next year, I'm like, trying to put the people in the right hats, you know. And Shannon, it took me forever to realize that you were part of the mission center, Mission Center team, you know, because you just, we have an amazing thing with the Community of Christ, where we are all equals. There's not this hierarchy that you perceive that you know, oh, this person is in charge. No, they're still cleaning toilets and flipping pancakes and cleaning pots and pans. And so, I think that was my biggest struggle going into 2024 is trying to put all the faces to names. So, it was wonderful having Chris there with 15 years experience, but we also knew that this was going to be Chris's last year at reunion, and so we're like trying to glean all this knowledge out of his brain. And that's not an easy task for even his family, let alone, you know, outsiders trying to get into that, and, but we also brought on Lexi Alexis Beer to be co-

directing with us, because her and I are going to be doing the next year. And so, it really felt like we had this trio that was just really asking a lot of questions, taking our history and trying to do more intermingling of all of our activities prior to getting to reunion. So, I'm one that very much likes the organic and letting our personalities and our experiences blending together, but being a little bit more intentional of pairing up our worships together and creative activities and making sure that we really sought out all the talent and experiences from our different mission centers. Yeah.

Robin Linkhart 04:45

Chris?

Chris Phelps 04:48

Working with Lisa has been great, and it's such a difference from John, not that John wasn't good. Oh, hang on, let me, let me rephrase. No, no, Lisa. Lisa has been great. And Lisa was willing, was very willing, in a way that John wasn't always to say, this is something I'd like to do. This is something that I'd like to see happen. This is a thing that we've done at Inland West that's worked really well and that we've enjoyed. Should we do it? Can we do it? And my answer was always, yeah, no, this isn't my reunion. This is our combined experience. So that was, that was wonderful. And from that we can, we had a family picnic in the afternoon on Sunday where we had sack races and sort of like those, some of those traditional, traditional activities for from like picnics, old, old style church picnics that we don't do in Canada West. It doesn't exist anymore.

Lisa Stecher 05:48

It's very American.

Chris Phelps 05:51

It was very American. And, in a way that kind of was a little culture shock at times, but it was also hilarious to watch the things happening and to have them be led by people who were coming out of the woodwork and leading, leading things organically. And that was, that was very wonderful. And also, Lisa pulled in some people to help and help do planning. So, when we were having our zoom planning sessions, we had more people from Inland West than we did from Canada West, and we were getting input in from young adults into what should happen at camp. And those young adults were stepping into roles and taking on some communication pieces and making things happen, which this is how you make a reunion experience sustainable, is you get people involved younger and doing more younger and wanting to be there and wanting to be involved in leading younger. So that was a wonderful dovetail to our previous experience. And I can't say enough about working with Lisa.

Robin Linkhart 07:01

Oh, thank you so much. Shannon and John, I have a lot of questions for you, so I'm just going to kind of fire hose you and let you go from there. I'm really interested in how you made sure that stories from those attending reunion 2023 were heard across your mission center so people could know, hey, there's something going on here that's special. Not that it wasn't special before, but it's like a new chapter was being written. So, tell us also how the planning and preparation for reunion '24 was for you and others in your mission center who were taking on reunion jobs and then how has combining

reunion impacted the interest level in attending reunion? I want to hear about what is being born from this new chapter of reunion. Who wants to go first?

Shannon McAdam 08:00

I can go a couple of things come to mind right away. One of the things we do on our mission center president team is we have a weekly article that we share with the Mission Center, just a reflection on something that's happening. And so what we've done in the summers is we create postcards, like virtual postcards, that we send out to the mission center. So, we made sure that we had photos and fun little stories that we were sharing out through our mission center communication streams on social media and in our email list, we've got some really great communication folks that help us with that in our mission center. And so just sharing our personal like, as the mission center president team members, there were three of us there sharing our stories, of our experience, I think really helped set that tone. And then we were able to kind of loop in a few stories at our Mission Center Conference about that, and then in terms of, like, kind of what I've heard from folks, there are folks that are much more excited about coming to camp because of that reason that's been mentioned a bunch of times now, where, when you have more bodies at camp, the workload is actually lighter, which some folks were afraid that, oh, More people is going to be more work? Yeah, probably for the cooks, it is more work. But there's also then more people who can, you know, help out and pitch in and chop things or do whatever needs to be done and do the cleaning so that it does, kind of the folk, the cooks, can focus just on that, like the logistical side of the cooking that's important. And so that has sparked some people, including myself, actually, to spend more time at reunion, because I had found personally, I was getting burnt out by going to reunion, because I was feeling like I had to say yes to doing so many things, but I've found that when you share the burdens with others, or share the responsibilities, it means that I can do what I love a little bit more, which is just talking with people, enjoying the sunsets, having those moonlight walks by the water.

Robin Linkhart 10:21

John, how about you?

John VanDerWalker 10:22

So much like Canada West, we have certain organs of communication that we use. We have a weekly news brief. There were photos and stories in that about a reunion. There was also, we published two print versions that goes to every member of the mission center twice a year, and those had stories about reunion in it. I think probably one of our best communication tools was Lisa. Lisa's really connected with the congregations around that are resident in the caucus or in the area that uses Samish, and she talked it up, and she was in her leadership of directing reunion. She got a lot of people involved in different things. So, I got to get a lot of credit to Lisa for that, and also the mission center staff, Sandy Decker, and I, at that time, we talked about the combined reunion in our conversations with folks as far as Montana and Utah, and we actually had people from Montana and Utah reunion. So that's a long, long trip to come to North West Washington to for reunion, but there's people that have come to say they will be back next year. So that's a real positive thing. That's the way we publicized it. I gotta say too, to echo what Shannon said, while it is a lot of work for the cooks and we've and that's a serious challenge that we have ahead of us of how to reduce that strain on the cooks. For me,

personally, it was a, last year, the first year 2023 was not easy. It was work for me. But stepping back this year and allowing Chris and Lisa to take the reins, Lisa for my mission center, I was able to actually enjoy a reunion, the first time, probably enjoy at that level, the first time in probably 20 years, it was just a very relaxing, I was able to sit with friends and visit with them, whereas before, I had other responsibilities. And so, for me, it was good. And I want to echo what Shannon said it this. It's been a good experience in that way. Thanks.

Robin Linkhart 12:59

Thanks for that. I know, attending this year, I observed that people were wholeheartedly engaged in whatever roles they were taking, and they seemed to be very balanced. I mean, they were joyful as they were participating and doing what they had signed up to do. But I wasn't seeing people doing like, 578, different things, and it really, the amount of balance in the reunion was very evident, and I think it just produced a lot of fruit and joy and allowed people to just sit and relax and enjoy what was going on. Okay, so now I want to hear from all of you about reunion 2024 whatever highs and lows you want to share about '24 Lisa, you want to start?

Lisa Stecher 13:56

So, I love reunion. I became a member of Community of Christ in, I was 22, a young mother of small children, and was baptized my last day at my very first reunion. As a person not born and raised in the Community of Christ, the concept of adults and going and experience camp, community living and you know, not just be centered around youth, has just always been my love of Community of Christ. We do it well. And so 2024 and planning reunion, I really enjoy the fun aspects of just getting to meet people in the most organic way of just having fun. And so we had the week called the. Sunday Social, where we got together, and everyone was like, What is this? What is this? What is this? It's like, it's just going to be fun. And so we had water relays and egg toss and, oh my gosh, as you're trying to lead these things, and you're trying so hard to be the leader, and you're just fellow belly laughing, falling on the ground, because it's just so adorable to see a five year old and his dad trying to toss an egg back and forth, and the arm winding up. And then, and then the watermelon eating contest. You know, this big slab of watermelon from ear to ear, and the young adults are very competitive. And how much do I have to eat? No red rind left. And I know there were several that needed showers when they were done with that. And the chickens on the island really enjoyed all of the watermelon rinds and then we had cotton candy. And the amount of people above 40 that were lining up for cotton candy was amazing. And the looks on their faces and the joy of going and having cotton candy, as you know, just being free to be this little kid again, it just started out the week, I thought that Sunday afternoon was such joy, and it just opened us up for incredible conversations and connections. And I have to say that I was really intentional this year of trying to understand what it's like to be a Canadian, to what it's like to be in Canada, and the view of the United States. And so, it was really eye opening to have conversations. You know, I had conversations. How, is there a homeless population in Canada, you know? And and having those conversations of, yeah, there is and, and it is just as concerning up there is as it is down here. And, and, you know, medical and, and they're like, because I know where I work, I have lots of I've had several, I work in an eye clinic that come to the United States to get eye surgery, you know, and and so it was just neat to have honest conversations about everyday life and how much we are alike. We we, we went in with this, Oh, you're so different, and we're so different. We're not. And so I guess the week just started with a lot of fun, the ability to come together and share the sacraments and

and then to just be authentic and share some of those burdens and concerns we have about our own lives, at home and and to relate. So, yeah, that was my 2024

Robin Linkhart 17:58

Chris?

Chris Phelps 18:03

Um, I think this is going to be a little odd, but one of the highlights was letting go. I've been running reunion for a lot of years, and being I've now got, I had a co-director this year who's going to be taking over next year Alexis Beer, and being able to say, this is your show, this is how I've been doing it. You're going to do it differently. That's good to go, grow, be different, be yourself. Give it your flavor. I think was, was a true joy. And I got to be there and be present and still be letting go, and I'll be there and present and letting go next year. So that was my one of my big highlights,

Robin Linkhart 18:47

Shannon, how about you?

Shannon McAdam 18:52

There's a couple of things that come to mind. One was I really needed reunion this year. I'd had a hard spring, and it was really lovely just to sink into being with my people, all of my people, from both mission centers and being cared for. There are things I remember in the adult class one day because we were it was the theme this year, was the climate emergency, and so just hearing so many different perspectives from both mission centers and people's reflections and really, like really wanting to understand and really wanting to hear each other and really wanting to see this changing world through each other's eyes, I was really moved by how earnest the discussion was, and how honest. And then the highlight I remember is so there was, I think it was, on Wednesday night, they had a dance party, and it was like a dance and I was, I was really tired, and I was like, I'm just going to go to the dining hall and sit upstairs. I had. Some, I don't know, some emails I had to write or something, and the music was so compelling from downstairs in the dining hall. I was like, Well, I'm just gonna go check it out and see what it's like. Well, there was, like it was magically transformed into this, like there was all these lights, and it was like mood lighting was dark and the music was exciting. And there's people from both mission centers of all ages just dancing their hearts out completely, just free. And there were people out on the grass outside dancing, and it was there was so much joy and so much like, just to see, I know, like, even if you look back in the history of Community of Christ, we haven't always allowed dancing and things like that, and just see the freedom of movement and allowing our bodies to be in the spirit together in a completely different way. And to see like the teenagers and the children and the older folks all enjoying being together and being free in that way, it was so great. I went upstairs and was like, guys, you guys all have to come downstairs because this dance party is the place to be. Yeah, that was one of the big highlights of the week for me.

Robin Linkhart 21:23

Awesome. John, how about you?

John VanDerWalker 21:27

So, like I said previously, this, this reunion this past summer, 2024 actually helped me imagine myself attending a reunion when I don't have to be there, I've, I've done a lot of reunions. Inland West Mission Center at one time, had four reunions every summer, and I attended all of those. And then I was against ministry at other reunions. So, I've done a lot of reunions in my life. I was not well during reunion, so I did not have any responsibilities other than just one or two things. And so I was given the grace to just be at reunion and participate at the level that I had the energy to do, and that was just really nice, and it gave me this opportunity to see what was going on. I didn't, didn't participate in the dance party because I was in bed, but I know that they had a dance party. I know they were playing cards upstairs, too. And you know, those kinds of things just didn't used to happen at Community of Christ reunions and, and it's, it's just wonderful to see people to come together and enjoy themselves in a way that is fun and then enjoy themselves in a serious way too. I mean, the worship services were, were poignant, and they were, they allowed that spirit to speak to those who would, who would open themselves to that. So, for me, it was just good to be able to see a community. I have dear friends that I've invested in Canada West, and it was so good to just be able to have them come by my trailer and visit with me and share one on one pick up where we left off last year. So, for me, it was a real experience of community, and I really appreciated it.

Shannon McAdam 23:37

Can I share one more other? Yes, do. So I have heard about fly fishing from John Vander Walker so many times in different sermons and spiritual practices and all these different things. And when I heard he was teaching fly fishing in the creative activity time, I've never fished or done anything of that sort, but I was like, I want to go to John's fly fishing, because I want to see what he loves about this so much, and to be able to have the freedom just go and try it, and just see John and his element in a different way. And to be just really bad at something, because we try something new for the first time. But John was so encouraging and kind to from the littlest, tiniest person who showed up for his class to myself, the awkward mission center president not sure what to do. It was just to me that that little fly fishing class was the embodiment of what reunion is.

John VanDerWalker 24:44

So, I gotta make a comment on this, because it was, it was thrilling for me, for each one of those participants. But I remember, when, there's a point when making a cast, when you know what is happening is right? I mean, you could feel it in your hand. You can feel the rod load. You can feel things just it's going to happen. I remember the look on Shannon's face when that happened, and she looked at me. I said, I get it. I understand now. The trick is repeating that, and that's the hard part. And after 40 years of doing it, I've got it down pretty good. But that was, that was a thrill for me to see I get it.

Robin Linkhart 25:31

That's great. Lisa, this next question is for you. So just briefly, what is the plan for reunion 2025 and I know we're way far away still.

Lisa Stecher 25:42

Well, it's been interesting because Lexi and I are both like, Okay, we're going to make it the Lexi and Lisa show, you know, and we're, we're already talking about, you know, we're excited about our guest ministry. We're excited to build on what we've done. And my, my goal is to intermingle us even more, you know, and we still very feel very heavy sided when it comes to our teachers, because we're, you know, two-to-one in that ratio there. And so just trying to, I guess, in my mind, we've people have come and they've seen and now let's implement, let's bring in more ideas of what they want. And I Chris is amazing. When people come to Chris and they have an idea, and he doesn't hesitate to say, that's an amazing idea, run with it. He doesn't take it on himself to to, you know, make that happen, because you have a, when you have someone that's passionate about it, and it's their idea and their desire. There's just this intensity in making it happen. And I think that's the biggest thing I've learned from Chris, is it's like, I don't have to do it all. And when you're leading a reunion of only 30 to 50 people, and you hear people being tired. You feel as the leader, you want to carry that burden. And so I really want to Lexi and I were talking about maybe getting T shirts, even that says, I don't know, ask Lexi. I don't know. Ask Lisa. You know, you know, just making sure that we as directors are really taking the time to make sure that the Spirit is leading us all in this journey. And I have to tell you, you know, in our own mission center, we had people that hadn't been to reunion in 20 plus years, and they brought their granddaughter, who was from Boston, who had never been to reunion, and all I kept hearing is the grandma. I don't know if we're going to get her next year. She's going to be driving, you know, I don't know if she's going to come from Boston back to northern Idaho again. Yet, last week, I got a call from grandpa. So, Lisa, how you doing? We're doing good. And he's like, Well, I just wanted to check in. You know, you talked about SPEC? And I'm like, Yeah. And he's like, Well, you know, I was wondering how we can get my granddaughter there, and she has went back to Boston in high school, and she's called her grandpa multiple times. Why can't school be like reunion? Why can't everyone want you to be your best and want to love you unconditionally? And I'm like, we've got her. She's coming back from Boston to reunion this next year. Grandma doesn't have to worry about that. And so, as John said, I I love to extend the invitation, and that's going to be our goal. I've already talked to another family that hasn't come to reunion in a couple years, and was telling them about the volleyball into the night and how we had to put, you know, people in tents. And he's I need to talk to my brothers. He says, We can bring a tent, he says, but if we can play volleyball into the night, he says, I think we need to come, you know, so the invitations are already going out just by us, talking about our experiences and what a joyful time and how you can just come and be fed and to be you and to be loved.

Robin Linkhart 29:43

Thanks, Lisa. I'm excited about 2025, now we've heard, as we've talked about, this, this journey, this story that you've written together, a lot about what you've learned during your experience. So I kind of want to dovetail it to. The question of, What do you know now that you wish you had known at the very beginning of this adventure, if you have learnings you haven't mentioned, feel free to talk about that. John, why don't you talk first.

John VanDerWalker 30:14

So, one of the things that has been kind of banging around in my head, and I, you know, I like I've mentioned in my introduction of myself. I've been around this barn a few times. I have been concerned about how the church is going to find expression in the future. And this is directly related to what the story that Lisa just shared about our friend from Boston that came to reunion. We have quite a few

people that come to reunion, that never attend Community of Christ congregations. They're members of the church. They value the church. They value what the church has done for them in their lives. But they come to reunion, and that is their church experience. So one of the things that I've learned is that, you know, we need to be engaged in providing a vibrant ministry at reunion for those people, because that is their spiritual touch point for the year. They have connections with family and they have connections with other church members in a in a non-formal way, but their formal experience with community is at reunion. So, one of the things that I've learned is that this is an essential Ministry of Community of Christ, that we need to really keep this going. Another thing I've learned is that even though we may have differences across international lines and cultural lines, we we are more alike than we are different, and we can appreciate each other and the gifts that each other bring. I really appreciate that Canada West brings their atheist every year, because reunion would not be the same without him. And he is such a vibrant part of our community that it's like we gotta have him. I'm also, you know, thankful that we can bring our you know, our mission center has got a lot of skills that have to do with the dirt and with mechanical things, and a lot of that comes together, and those connections are made, made between folks that have those experiences in Canada too. So, there's just, there's just some things that community is built on so many levels, and it's really good. This year, I had the opportunity to really get to know a young man who's an expert in heating and air conditioning. And, I'm aware that we need some upgrades at the campground. I said, Hey, put some brain cells on this for us, would you? Think about how we can heat these spaces more efficiently? Since we're talking about climate, let's get some experts working on this force for the campground. So, I've learned a lot, and and I continue to learn, and I'm really thankful for the efforts that Chris and Lisa and Alexi put into this year. So, thank you guys.

Robin Linkhart 33:27

So Chris, anything that you know now you wish you had known at the very beginning of this adventure.

Chris Phelps 33:35

I think I knew this at the beginning, but probably didn't implement it, and I still probably wouldn't implement it well enough, but if you think you've communicated well enough, communicate more. Because, it's the hardest thing to let people know what's going on, to make sure people are informed, to make sure that people feel like they're included in the in the experience, in the organization and that was, that was the biggest challenge, I think, that we had, and still will be, it's just hard to communicate, especially with a group that gets bigger, and we don't have a central form of communication for everything. So a lot of stuff is word of mouth, but that's the that was the biggest thing that I would say I needed to learn. I need to learn, and I will pass along to the people who are doing it in the future.

Robin Linkhart 34:29

Thanks, Shannon,

Shannon McAdam 34:36

I think it's the lesson I'm always learning, which is to trust spirit and just to continue to trust that that good spirit is already working and it's continues to work, and yeah, just that's what i If I could go back to two years ago, she and I give her a gentle reminder just to trust that Holy Spirit.

Robin Linkhart 34:56

Lisa?

Lisa Stecher 35:01

I think, along with Chris communication. But I think what I would focus on from the beginning is connections. So this year, we had a human bingo card, the very first gathering, and we had to go around and find people with different, you know, likes, dislikes, hobbies and I think I we want to implement that further in even encouraging people to, like Shannon says, sit with someone different, you know, maybe assigning table numbers and handing them out on their their trays when they go through and creating, you know, opportunities to really get to know people, not just sit in a service and listening to the people up front, but to be intentional about these are our brothers and sisters and children in Christ and letting them actually put a name to a face when you leave, not just put them all in one big puzzle, you know.

Robin Linkhart 36:08

So, I know among our listeners that we have other people who feel challenged with how reunions are, how well reunions are being attended, having folks that are doing multiple jobs with reunions, who may be wondering if they could do something like you have done and combine a reunion. What would you want to share with other people who may be considering doing something similar to what you have done? Shannon?

Shannon McAdam 36:40

I would say, keep it simple. I think sometimes we get wrapped up in this is how we've always done things, or well we can't, we have to do this, or we have to do that. And I think just really, honestly asking ourselves, what are the core things, or what's the feeling that we want people to have? What is the, what are the ways we want the spirit to show up? And make it easy for the spirit to show up, and kind of boil it down to those essentials, if we can and start there, because you can always add more activities and things later, like we didn't do the picnic the first year, something we added the second year. So, keep things simple and yeah, be willing to learn new things.

Robin Linkhart 37:33

Lisa, how about you?

Lisa Stecher 37:37

What's interesting with that is we had already dwindled in size, and so the last couple reunions, we had to make decisions of what mattered most and where were we going to put our energy. And so, you know, what we realized is the kitchen takes a lot of energy, closing up the last day. And so, at our old, you know, our last reunion, just the Inland West, we made breakfast the last morning, sandwiches that didn't take any dishes or anything. So, closing up. So, what I'm trying to say is we had already given up the little things that didn't matter to where we were just focusing on what mattered most. And so, changing to a different reunion and a different schedule and a different seemed very easy for me in inland west so I think that's what's what I would encourage, is people to just really have that honest conversation. What kind of energy is it to make this happen? What matters most? And just take the core of what reunion means to people and let the Spirit lead you like Shannon said.

Robin Linkhart 38:56

Chris, how about you?

Chris Phelps 39:00

My message would be, just do it. It's going to mean change. It's going to mean gaining some new wonderful things and probably having to let some things go. But change is the nature of life, and that's okay. Allow things to evolve, allow things to grow, allow things to be different, and sit back and wonder at the great things that come out of it.

Robin Linkhart 39:28

John, any wise counsel from you?

John VanDerWalker 39:31

Well, as I stated at the beginning, this was born out of what I sensed was kind of a necessary move to preserve vibrant ministry and actually enhance vibrant ministry. I'm the kind of guy that if, if I have an idea, don't tell me why I can't do it, because I'm not going to like that. Let's, let's talk together about why we can do it, and why we should do it. And that's what I found with working with Canada West, is that it was this, these are the ways we can do it, and this is the way we should do it. And I really appreciate what, what Lisa said about, you know, the things that matter most, because there were some we're finding, and we're still finding some of the traditions that we have aren't that important, that they're nice, comfortable things, but really we can do without some of them, and we have discovered some things that we can do without. So, it is, I think all of the council given here keep it simple. Just do it. You know what matters most? Those are the things that are important and don't ever go into this trying to find why we shouldn't do it. Always, always look at, okay, what are the positives that can come out of this? How can we better the mission of Christ through our combined effort?

Robin Linkhart 41:07

I always like to give folks one last chance. If there's something that you have on your heart you're burning to share today, this is the time. So, any last thing that you want to say?

Chris Phelps 41:17

yeah, one of the most fun moments that I had in the entire experience of combining our reunions and putting all the pieces together was standing on Saturday evening in 2023 with John VanderWalker sharing the opening gathering and playing off one another and being fun and light and having a good time and seeing, seeing the pieces of the conversations that had happened for several months come together in a lighthearted banter that when I look back 10 years previous to when I first met John, we would not have had. We had some conflict when we first met. So the evolution of that to this moment together was astounding. And that's the kind of thing that you don't know you're going to get when you enter the when you enter the process and say, we're going to combine things. It was unexpected and beautiful.

Robin Linkhart 42:25

Anyone else have something you just want to say? Shannon.

Shannon McAdam 42:29

I just want to build on what Chris said, because I think what the, two pieces I pull out from that would be one, the importance of relationships between leaders. Like it really is important to cultivate those collaborative relationships. And then I want to pull out also what Chris said about that their relationship, in some ways, was born out of conflict. And I think so often we think, Oh our differences are going to be our downfall. But actually, our differences are our strength, and our differences are what build relationships and sharing. And, coming back to the table over and over, whether it's the communion table or the lunch table or the planning table, and we keep coming back to that table with the willingness to move forward., that's, I think, where beautiful things really can happen.

Robin Linkhart 43:25

Any last thoughts John or Lisa?

John VanDerWalker 43:27

So, I kind of want to lift up that. I don't know whether to take exception with Chris calling me a crotchety old man. I'll take the I'll take the crotchety part, but I don't know about old. The reality is, Chris is right. We did have, we did start our relationship in conflict. The thing that I've experienced, and I think it's fed by reunion, is that reunion gives us the opportunity to live what we say we believe, and that is the extension of grace toward one another, as God has extended grace toward us, and we experience it at the communion table. We experience it in the banter at the opening worship. We experience it when we take youth down to the point and read a children's story and and experience God's grace poured on us through the natural beauty of the place. So, for me, reunion is that opportunity to not only experience grace in a spot that we decided a long time ago, was a sacred space, but also to be able to extend grace toward one another. And I appreciate the grace that Chris extended toward me to agree to work with me in the beginnings of this and I... that's my lesson.

Robin Linkhart 45:01

Any last thoughts from you today, Lisa?

Lisa Stecher 45:09

I'm just in awe of how the Spirit leads us all together, and when you're in the depths of planning and stuff, just taking the moment and enjoying the connections and the relationships. And I just really value the ability to work with everyone and to be able to laugh and worry and complain all together as we plan this.

Robin Linkhart 45:40

Well, Lisa, Chris, John and Shannon, thank you so much for being with us today, here at Project Zion Podcast.

Chris Phelps 45:49

Thank you for having us. I'm looking forward to the Lisa and Lexi show next year.

John VanDerWalker 45:54

Yes, thank you, Robin for inviting us to do this. And for all the listeners, if you haven't been to a Community of Christ reunion. You should go to one.

Robin Linkhart 46:04

if you would like to hear more about the Community of Christ reunion, camping tradition. Check out Episode 117, Reunions with Lach Mackay and Janna Grover. You can also see the show notes for today's podcast. For other links of interest.

Blake Smith 46:22

You've been listening to an episode in the project Zion podcast series. What's brewing? This was part two of a two-part series.

Robin Linkhart 46:30

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.