

# Nice To Matcha | New Leader | Joey Williams, Pt 1

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Joey Williams, Community of Christ, Council of 12 Apostles, youth ministry, formation ministries, international church, faith journey, Camp Opportunity, ordained ministry, Enduring Principles.

## SPEAKERS

Joey Williams, Robin Linkhart, Blake Smith

### **Blake Smith** 00:26

Hey, Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, Project Manager for Project Zion Podcast. Recently, host Robin Linkhart sat down with Joey Williams, whose call to the office of apostle will be considered by the upcoming Community of Christ World Conference. The conversation was so good that we've split it into two episodes. This is part one of that conversation. We hope you'll enjoy.

### **Robin Linkhart** 00:53

Welcome to Nice to Matcha, a Project Zion Podcast series where we meet new people, leaders, movers and shakers. I'm your host, Robin Linkhart, and today I'm here with Joey Williams, 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, Joey will be ordained during a worship service at that same conference. It's great to have you with us today. Joey,

### **Joey Williams** 01:27

Well, it's great to be back on Project Zion, Robin. Thanks for having me.

### **Robin Linkhart** 01:32

Sure thing. Now, Joey, you have been a guest on Project Zion before, but today, we are going to get to know you much better. So let's start with the basics. Why don't you take a few minutes to introduce yourself to our listeners?

### **Joey Williams** 01:49

Well, I'm Joey. Joey Williams. That's really important, actually, because I was just telling my mom the other day I do not connect when people say Joe. It's really important that I'm a Joey. In fact, when I meet other Joes, I never put together that we both kind of come from the same name Joseph, but that's my nickname, is Joey, and I've kind of always gone by Joey. My family actually called me Joey Carter growing up, which is interesting for for Jimmy Carter, who just passed away. I was born and raised in Independence, Missouri. I was part of a family of five that included my dad, Bob, my mom, Judy, my brother, Jeff, and my sister Julie. So, you see the importance of J's in our naming in the family. So, it was Bob, Judy, Jeff, Julie, Joey, growing up, and I am the youngest. I am 10 years younger than my

sister, 14 years younger than my brother. So, it's almost like I either had, you know, four adults in my family most of my life growing up, my sister had a son, Kyle, who is now married to Hannah, and they have two boys, Scotty, who's two years old, and Jones, who is four and a half years old. So you can imagine, everything in our family life now revolves around my nephews. So the whole world revolves around them. I work in Formation Ministries at the Temple as a formation ministries specialist. And what that basically means is that I get to be part of the creation of resources that are used throughout the church, as well as worships and trainings that I get to be invited to out in the field. And in that role, I have worked most closely with the multi-nations team of apostles to help develop resources for the international church. So, an example of that might be the the booklet that we have of Sharing in Community of Christ, making sure that that gets translated and published in many different languages. Swahili was the most recent one that we just finished with that.

**Robin Linkhart 04:07**

Alrighty, so we're gonna go back and into time, so to speak, and we want to hear your growing up story, like, where did you grow up, and what was life like for you, in your family and community, your interests, your hobbies, and in the midst of that story, we want to hear a little bit about where was God and faith in all of that for you.

**Joey Williams 04:33**

Yeah. So, like I said, I was born and raised in Independence, so in some ways, I may have had a very different experience of growing up than many people in Community of Christ, being born right down the street from the Auditorium. I was actually born in the church's hospital at the time, called the Sanitarium and, at the time, and so I was kind of surrounded by church life. My mom and dad were heavily involved. They were, not only was my dad a pastor several different times while I was growing up, but they were youth leaders. So mom and dad and I know they did at least 40 plus years as kind of the official junior high youth leaders for Central Mission, what was then called Center Stake. But they also, before that, had done youth ministry in Kingsville, Missouri, where they were before I was born, and had done many years of youth ministry there when I was a little kid. I love to swim. So, swimming has been a part of my earliest memories. I was on, I think I was five or six when I joined the the swim team that was actually held at a church pool. So, where we have our Mission Center offices today, there used to be a swimming pool there called the campus swimming pool, and I was on the campus swim team. So, swimming has just been a huge part of growing up. It's kind of that place that I go to when I went to connect with with my own body, but also with my childhood. I also had a love for horses. I wanted to be a cowboy. I remember, before my first day of school, I actually put my cowboy boots and my jeans and my cowboy shirt and my cowboy hat on my bed like laid them all out before I got into bed, so that all my clothes were ready for that first day of school and I was gonna go to school as a cowboy. Now that's because Kingsville was a really important part of my whole elementary school life. We had a country store that we still had back in Kingsville while I was in grade school, and so a lot of my time would be being picked up after school and taking a 45 minute drive down into the country where my parents ran a country store. Where was God in growing up. I think there has always been a sense of being drawn to the Spirit. So, this idea that there's something beyond, something more than what maybe we see at this time, and that always appealed to me, and I was very curious about it. Apparently, my mom would tell me that I would ask tons of questions about after this life, or where, where are the people that have gone before us? And I had a lot of answers, I guess, to that as well.

She said that she sometimes she was amazed at some of the weird things. And, you know, kids say the the craziest things, but sometimes they have some real insight, maybe, of parts of the connection to the spirit that we lose with time as we become too focused on the present and on the reality of things around us. But I probably developed that sense of the spirit with those 45 minute drives down to Kingsville. So being in the car with my mom and she certainly cultivated and nurtured within me that desire to not only recognize where the Spirit is, but to feel the spirit's movement in my life and in the world around us. In fact, a story that my parents would both tell me quite often growing up, and this probably shaped me as they told this story over and over. I was, I guess, four or five, we were at a youth camp that my parents were directing. My dad had just given some really powerful words, apparently, to the youth that were gathered there, and I was probably in the back playing, but I guess they say that it got really, really quiet, like right after he spoke, there was just this complete silence. And out of that silence, I guess I started walking up to the front where my dad was from the back, and I was saying, Can you feel it? Can you feel it? And I didn't have the words to say, Can you feel the spirit, but apparently I was, I was just saying, Can you feel it? And so that feeling of the movement of the spirit has kind of always been a part of my faith journey, but also just it's just been a reality of my experience of life, that the spirit is somewhat always present and always poking its way into the life that maybe we have planned. The other weird thing, and maybe it's not too weird, because I've learned as I've grown up, this isn't as weird as it seemed when I started to realize what was going on. But growing up in Independence, I knew so many people out in my community life that were part of the church, so it was not unusual for my school nurse in junior high, Sherry Baker to be a church member, or for me to go to the doctor's office. And when somebody there would work, you know, would be working there, but they would be a member of the church, or we'd go to restaurants and see people from the Community of Christ all over the place, out in the community. I think, I think it. I know at least one mayor that we had of Independence while I was growing up, kind of the main part of my adolescence, that mayor was a member of Community of Christ. And I mean, that's not to be like, ooh, Community of Christ is so involved in the community. I think what I thought of that experience growing up was Community of Christ. Being a member of Community of Christ is involved, and there are unlimited possibilities of what you can do with your life and still be an integral part of this faith community. So, to see people expressing their faith in their everyday roles, that fascinated me, and I think that has become even today, what I love about the international church of seeing how people express their faith in their everyday lives and in the jobs that they have, and in the communities where they participate and in the ways that they participate in their community life,

**Robin Linkhart 12:02**

That's fascinating. I I love, I love hearing you talk about all of that, and your awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit from a young age and I echo what I think I heard you say is that, as young human beings, sometimes we have a keener awareness of those kinds of things. Yeah, yeah, that's exciting. So, tell us a little bit about junior high and senior high.

**Joey Williams 12:29**

Junior high and senior high. Well, Junior High started out rough. So, I know as soon as I could get away, that my mom would let me ride my bike by myself, kind of within our neighborhood. You know, I only lived, like two blocks away from the Auditorium, but when there was a World Conference, I was on my bike and up there. One of my favorite things to do was to go whenever they were preparing for the

flag ceremony, and I would just roam the halls, because they would be all lined up out in, you know, the halls, and there's all these ramps in the auditorium, and these people from all these nations all around the world, and all of this diversity that I had not seen. You just don't see that in when I was growing up in Independence, but to have all of that in one space with all of these flags, and you know, it's like where the United Nations some type of flag ceremony, but I would just roam and walk up and down those halls and just be kind of amazed to be in the presence of all of these people from places from all over the world and that was just, it was just incredible for me to have that experience. But I would go into the balcony as well and listen to these sessions. My mom was probably a delegate, and I remember I was 11 years old, and I was at a World Conference where section 156 was read. And that was a weird experience for me. It was as though all of the breath, the way I describe it, from my memory, is, it was as though all of the breath went out of the room when those words were read, which is really weird, because going back I mean, such a liberating text for women's ministry, calling women into priesthood roles, or recognizing that women were being called into priesthood roles. And then the second part that is this, we're going to build a temple. And you know, the excitement of it's going to really happen, the reality of making this dream of a temple come to life, what an exciting scripture to then be shared that became scripture. You know, with the church, what an exciting journey to be on. And yet, the beginnings of that were pretty difficult. I had a youth group of about 30 youth that were just in my middle school age range. And the next Sunday, when I went to school, they were, they were like three or four or five of us. I mean, it was a very small group of people. And thanks to my parents being youth leaders, they worked so hard to continue to connect all of those youth so most of the people, even though they some of them, you know, ended up coming back with a little bit of time. But my parents worked so hard to continue to connect those kids in youth camps and the different activities that we were doing. But that youth group was was really important to my faith journey as well. Those times when we were just sitting in a circle, dealing with the relationships between us. I remember a time when a kid called me out right in front of my mom, who was leading a session, called me out for being a bully, and that person eventually, of course, became one of my closest friends, because it was this space. How was, how was a space created that was so safe that he was able to call me out right in front of and maybe it was because my mom was there. He knew she'd take care of it, but it also was a safe space for me to face that and to deal with, okay, what? What is it going on? What am I doing, and how am I behaving, and how do I want to be? And I think youth group why it's so important for young people is to create that safe space to explore, not only what am I going to do with my life, which a lot of people think that's what school is about, right? But really, what type of person am I going to be? And I think youth groups do such a great job of shaping that by the time I got into high school, I was, you know, I don't know. I've been involved in so many different things. I love so many hobbies, and, you know, I got to be able to do so many different things, like volleyball and and different sports, like I kept swimming, of course, played football until I was in high school, and then I had to make, make a decision between band and football. And I loved playing percussion in high school, percussion has been a really important part of even my faith journey. I My motto is make noise. Which N, O, I, Z, so you spell it backwards, it's Z, i, o, n. I just love this concept of that we, we joyfully make noise. And you know, we praise in a joyful manner with the noises that we make. So, I was really involved in, I got more involved with school things, and yet youth group still became this great place where community connection could happen in very different ways. And then, of course, the camping program in high school, I branched out to a couple new camps. So, one of those really important camps that we did was a camp called Camp Opportunity. And my mom took me there when I was 12 years old, so I really wasn't supposed to be

there. I was always a camp brat, by the way, I went to every SPEC growing up, every Spectacular at Graceland, my mom would take me. I was at SPEC the entire time. She only made me not go the year before I was supposed to go as an actual camper, so that I would kind of have this year off and actually have an experience as a camper myself. But she took me to this camp called Camp Opportunity, which is for physically, mentally and sexually abused children. And you know, as my mom was always busy, and everyone is assigned, it's a one on one camper and staff ratio. And so, of course, I saw myself as mom's helper, or I like to call myself the first counselor in training. We didn't really say CIT back then, counselors in training, but I think I was, like one of the first counselors in training. And the kid that she had was like 11 years old, and I was 12 years old, so I really should have just been this kid's friend, but I took it seriously, as though I was there to help my mom and listening to that kid's story and comparing it with my story at such a young age, really began to shape and mold my desire for other people to have safe spaces in their lives. And so I. I ended up doing Camp Opportunity for many years. So that was my other go to camp, junior high camp, middle school camp that stayed a really important camp, mainly because my mom had been, mom and dad had been directing it, but also because it just kind of became that place that I went and was able to experience the Spirit, the Spirit moving maybe. Maybe it's because we were very intentional for a week to see where the Spirit was moving in our lives. But that's why it, I think, became a sacred space that I would return to. And then I had lots of interesting opportunities. I was kind of a church hopper, because I sang in a choir called the Center Place Singers, and so this, that was out of Stone Church, which wasn't my church in high school. I went to a different congregation, but I participated in their youth and young adult choir, and that gave me opportunities to go all over our Mission Center, be in different churches all the time, singing in different places around our mission center. And then, because I like to sing and do music and different things, often congregations would invite me to come and do special music or be a part of their service in different ways. So, those are kind of the ways that I was involved and saw the Spirit moving as I was in high school and middle school.

**Robin Linkhart 20:29**

Wow, that is just a beautiful story, and it it goes so deep in lots of different directions. I like the image of you as a church hopper, joyfully making noise across the Mission Center and beyond. Alrighty, so you're through high school and you're ready for the next few chapters of your life. So, tell us about college and beyond for a bit and until you get to a place of connecting with the church in a different way.

**Joey Williams 22:11**

Oh gosh. Talk about being a a church hopper. I was, I was also a university hopper. So I, I went to school. I started my college life, university life in Rochester, New York, which was actually pretty far away from a congregation. So, the closest congregation was Palmyra, and the only person that like lived in New York to take me was the pastor, and at the time, they had like, two services. They also did a breakfast and a brunch and a lunch. And I mean, they were active, and they had two services as well as Sunday school class. So we had to leave Rochester at like, 530 in the morning just to get to the Palmyra congregation. So, I have to be honest and let you know that I probably didn't make it to church as much as I probably should have gotten up to go to but in the same way, that also was the first time that I was a little free to explore other faith traditions. So, down in Rochester, at our university, we even had a church that met in our performing arts center on Sundays. And so, that was the first time that I

kind of really went out and stepped into other faith spaces to see what that was like. And it was a very different experience. It was, the music was always wonderful. It was kind of a, I don't want to say a mega church, but it was a large, it was a large gathering of people. And, you know, they, they had cell groups, and so they, they met, kind of on smaller scale, but really it was all about that Sunday gathering and the good music and a good preacher, and that was just a very interesting experience, because it was very different from my experience of Community of Christ, which was usually smaller groups that are gathering with pretty much the whole goal for the potluck afterwards to stay and have all of that community fellowship around our shared eating or going out to a meal after church. Or, when I was a kid, of course, we were inviting people to our home on different Sundays for, to have them come and share with us in our home. At the end of that year, I had transferred to Northwestern University in Chicago, and I was excited because I really wanted to go into musical theater. I was, I was studying opera in Rochester, but I really wanted to go into musical theater. And I changed to go to Northwestern because I thought they would have a good program for that. And before I went up for school, somebody called and said, Do you want to go to SPEC as staff? And I just, you usually had to wait two years out of high school before you could be on staff at SPEC. And I was, I jumped at it because, of course, Spectacular was, is one of the greatest experiences that we offer our youth, I think, in the church, to meet youth from all over the United States, at least at the time. And of course, in our international IYF years, you meet so many other people. So, I jumped at that opportunity, and I go to SPEC and of course, they've got all of their recruiters up there, and throughout the week, as they were hearing what I was doing, and as I reconnected with my faith community friends who had chosen to go to Graceland from high school and people that I had met at SPEC, and I reconnected with all of those people again. I changed, and I decided I'm going to go to Graceland that next year. So, there were two schools that I said I would never go to, which was Graceland University and the University of Missouri in Kansas City, and that's where I got my degrees, and my master's degrees are from both of those schools. So yeah, I gave in, and it ended up, you know, socially, it was wonderful to reconnect and such a great way to go through school, to have such a large group of people that many of which not only shared your faith, but also just had been lifelong friends. So, I think having those friends that I had known since I was a kid became really important to continue those connections and those relationships. At the end of that year, I bought a car, and so I bought a car. I was also in a boy band that I had become a part of, All for One. And so, we were kind of singing all over the place, and we wanted to get a little more serious about that. So, I needed to be a little closer to Independence. And so, I decided to change schools. So, when I bought this car, I bought this car from a woman who worked at the school for the deaf in Olathe, Kansas. And I was like, Oh, we had a lady down the street who taught sign language. Growing up, there was this deaf man who, he was kind of famous. He was the guy at World Conference that if you remember, in the 70s, 80s and 90s, he was there all the time. I think he lived over 100 years old. John Steele was his name. And when I was little, I had an experience where he came by while I was doing a lemonade stand, and I just felt so bad because I couldn't ask him, Do you want some lemonade?, because I didn't know what to do. So, I went down the street and had the lady teach me the alphabet so that I could one day then say, Do you and spell it out with my hands to invite him to have a lemonade, well, to buy one. So that experience marked me, and then this lady says, Yeah, and I'm also putting together, we're opening a Deaf Interpreting Program at the University of Kansas. And as we talked more and more, she said, would you be interested in that program? And something clicked, you know, It, and my life is like this, it's like these opportunities present, and if you say yes, it is going to take you down this crazy path, right? So, I was just like, This is so wild. And since I'm kind of, you know, I'm

going to study somewhere different, I knew I was going to already study music, continue my music studies at UMKC, but I could work it out to be in both of those programs at the same time. So, I spent a year doing a Deaf Interpretation Sign Language Program at KU which was the probably that's what got me down my languages path, and I continued to study music at the Conservatory at UMKC. I'm also singing in my little boy band and doing things there. And life just continues to just throw me all over the place. I end up going back to Graceland, where I I'm now kind of done with my studies, so I'm there for a semester, and then I'm supposed to graduate at the, you know, the, in the second semester. And I have this, like I'm done, like I have no more classes to take, and I had gotten into French. I had a friend that lived in Paris. She was studying a year abroad, and I went to visit her during spring break. And that, the year before, and that was just like, Ooh, man, I really want to learn more French. And that was a really cool experience. Well, I was like, Where can I go and learn French? And I had heard that Tahiti was, like, one of the most hospitable places in Community of Christ. And so that next year, it's like, December, I buy a ticket to Tahiti, because I've decided I'm just gonna go and spend my last semester in Tahiti. And I worked with the school, and I was like, you know, if I go to Tahiti for a few months, what can that give me some, you know, French credit. So, I was able to get a minor in French. But I am just, like, creating my own little, like, last semester of what to do. The problem is I didn't, I didn't know anybody in Tahiti, and I literally just called the apostle at the time, and I said, Hey, I've bought a ticket to Tahiti. And he's like, What? He's like, Well, that's fine. Maybe we can connect you with somebody who's like, how long are you going for? Probably thinking that I was going for like a week or two, and I'm like, oh, it's for the semester. It's for three months. So, I also like to, you know, I said that I am, my, I created the counselor in training program to be a CIT. I think I also created World Service Core. I like to give myself credit for that, that I I just kind of like created this, this opportunity for myself to go and he actually, he was a new apostle at the time, and so he got a hold of the the former apostle who probably had a few more connections, who called me and said, Joey, I hear you've gotten yourself into a pickle. You've purchased the ticket, and you're ready to go. So, I found a family that will receive you, and man, did that family receive me. And I got over there and connected with the people of French Polynesia in a way that that changed my life forever. That experience was so strong that when I finished school, I decided I am going to learn French, because I didn't speak it well. While I was there at all, I was definitely in training, and I decided I'm going to learn French. It was expensive to live in Tahiti, and plus, I wanted to continue my music. You know, my musical desires. So, I decided to go. I became a nanny in Paris in France, and I decided to go to France and continue my music study. So, I started my master's program over in France in music at the conservatory there in Paris. And that's, that's where, that's where it all happens in terms of the rest of my story. So I'm there, I'm I'm watching a four year old and a one year old in this family, trying to learn this crazy language, enjoying Parisian life, trying to figure out a little bit of who I am and what's going on. I was in, I was in this huge vocal competition, and I ended up taking, like, third place, which was pretty cool because I had just arrived. I remember my French was so bad though, that they asked me, you were supposed to sing a French song and then another song. And the people that took first, second and third place, they actually gave a recital after that competition, and they asked me not to sing my French song. They asked me to sing two songs in Italian, because they were just worried what people would think about my French pronunciation, which was hilarious. But I remember walking home after that, and that's where I was, like, I had kind of this, this career and professional crisis. I was like, Oh, I mean, I love music. Opera has been fun, but I really said yes to opera because of the opportunities it gave me. It kept kind of putting me on that path of more and more schooling to study in that way. And I was like, I started weighing, is that really where I

want to be? And it's funny, because that is kind of where I stepped out of the opera world. I continued in the music world. But it was interesting because what would have probably happened with my studies of opera, I probably would have lived in different countries, traveled a lot of places in the world, and learned many different languages and used music all the time. And where what have I done in my career in Community of Christ, well, I've lived in different countries, I've traveled a lot of the world. I've been able to continue to use music, and I've learned several languages. At Christmas time, and this is the, probably the most important part of this story, at Christmas time, I went home to visit my family on that year that I was in France, my mom bought me a ticket to surprise my family at Christmas. But I had a friend from Graceland who contacted me and said, Hey, I'm coming with this lady, Cindy Van Rossum, who lives in Holland. She's American, but she lives in Holland. Would it be okay if we stayed at your place? And I'm like, well, I won't be here, but I will, I can leave you a key, and if you want, you can come, and I'm going to be gone for two weeks. And so they came and took advantage of that. And Cindy Van Rossum, you know, she was an adult, so she understood it's expensive to go and just visit Paris, and she wrote me the nicest letter. And when I came back home, I find, you know, my, my they they made, probably left my apartment cleaner that I had left it for them, and she left candies on the on the bed, and then this note that said, if you would like to, you should come and visit us in Holland, in the Netherlands. And so, of course, when I was finished with that year of school. I I took advantage of that, and so I called her up and I said, Hey, I'm going to get on a train and I'm going to come to the Netherlands. She happened to be married to the mission center president, the Europe president of the church at that time, Jerry Van Rossum, who as good mission center presidents and ministers do, began to invite me into all the different things that he was a part of. And he was making a trip down to southern France, and he invited me to come and translate for that, which I was like, I still don't speak French that great, but sure I'll go and do that. He took me to different places when he worked in the Netherlands and in Germany. And two of the really important kind of life changing moments was it was the same weekend. It's just that they held one in the Netherlands and one in Germany, and they were young adult weekends, which just so you know, young adult at the time in Europe, meant anyone from like 15 years old to 50 years old. So, it was a large diverse group of age ranges of people. But I go to this weekend in Germany meeting these people who spoke this language that I had never heard, and I am like, where am I? And what is this? This is so cool. These people are so cool, and this is so different. And then we've opened up these materials that, at the time, were called core values of the church, and today, we would know those as what we call our Enduring Principles. And as I began to read these concepts of that every person has worth, and I read, you know, we're better when we have unity in the diversity that we have, and just some of the ideas that God still speaks today, which I, you know, I said that from the beginning, the spirit is constantly moving in and around us, and I began to really lean into that. It was a huge shift in terms, I mean, I was always connected with church life. So I can't say that I was like on my way out of church or anything, but I was certainly in a stage of life where, if we didn't begin to lean towards principled living, as opposed to rule based living, I think Community of Christ has always been principle based. However, some of our principles had led to some pretty strict rules. And of course, I was a part of breaking some of those rules. You know, we never danced in the church until I was in high school, and then we had our first, you know, mission center dance that we were able to do, but hearing those principles gave me real hope, not only for who we were, but who we were becoming. I started to think about man, if we really applied these things, these core values, these principles of life, into everything we do, what type of world could we see emerge from that? So, that was a turning point in my life. So, I did that weekend in Germany. I did that weekend again in the



Netherlands, met some of the people that have become the closest people in my faith journey over in Europe. I then went to that trip to southern France, where I stayed in Ervelyn Bernard's house. She's a translator, French translator for the church. I had not met her, so I did not know her, but I'm staying in her house. And later after that, we would become, you know, companions on the journey, I would say, on our French faith journey and her English speaking journey as a French English interpreter for the church. Those experiences led to just so many opportunities that when I came home, I remember calling that French family that I connected with down there and just being like, I just want to get back to France. I want to get back to to be with you guys, just meeting, meeting our church family over in Europe. It changed, changed everything, and I wanted, I wanted that international community to be a part of my faith journey for the rest of my life.

**Robin Linkhart 41:22**

So one thing I want to pick up on that thread of unfolding life from college going forward, is where did ordained ministry come in for you?

**Joey Williams 41:37**

Oh, you know, God has God's timing. I Yeah, right, ah, oh my gosh, yeah. In the it, I'm trying to, like, you know, give me the timeline of my life, even though I've told this story several times. But getting the timeline is a little challenging, but it was after my experiences in Europe, okay, and I, I had come back, you know, I'm probably 25 by then, and the pastor, the person who had become pastor at my congregation that I had, you know, only gone to for Christmas, and times that I was back home because I was now, I had this journey that was all over the place, but this person had known me since my childhood, had seen me grow up, and she gives me a call and says, Can you come up to the church on such and such day, at such and such time, and in a room, she had prepared, she was one of those people that always created a perfect ambiance, and she had prepared a basket and we had communion, and I am like, I don't know what is going on. And, and then she says, You have a call to elder, and I'm like, what? And you know at the time that just seems like such a, such a role in the life of the church that I had no idea. I mean, I knew what it meant. I knew what elders did in Community of Christ, but man, I had never seen myself in that grouping of people. And you know, I just, I just was, like, kind of overwhelmed with that. And yet, I know it was the, I know it was the reconnecting, the discovery of hospitality in French Polynesia, the connecting of this larger international faith community that I was like, I want, I want to be a part of that. Whatever's going on there, I want to be a part of that. And so I said, I said yes, and was ordained as an elder, not knowing. And she very clearly said, this, this may not, this ministry that we are being called to may not happen in this congregation. It's like she she knew that I was going to be doing other things.

**Robin Linkhart 44:23**

Wow. So thank you. Thank you for that.

**Blake Smith 44:28**

You've been listening to an episode of Nice to Matcha featuring a conversation between host, Robin Linkhart, and special guest, Joey Williams. Be sure not to miss part two of this conversation, where Robin and Joey will explore more deeply Joey's journey in ordained ministry.