

What's Brewing | Partnering in Ministry | Noel Scherer and Janelle Anders

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Lamoni Heartland Mission Center, Prairie Bluffs Mission Center, Guthrie Grove Campgrounds, partnership, financial stewardship, community engagement, young adult involvement, leadership development, climate emergency response, citizen diplomacy, global connection, mission initiatives

SPEAKERS

Noel Scherer, Robin Linkhart, Janelle Anders

Robin Linkhart 00:29

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 Janelle Anders and Noel Scherer. Janelle and Noel both serve as the Mission Center president and financial officer for their mission centers. Janelle serves Lamoni Heartland Mission Center. And Noel serves Prairie Bluffs Mission Center. They are here today to talk about mission and what it looks like to partner in mission. Welcome Janelle and Noel. We are so glad to have you with us today. Thanks for making time for this.

Noel Scherer 01:19

Hello.

Janelle Anders 01:20

Hello.

Robin Linkhart 01:22

So, let's take a few minutes now for introductions. Just tell us a little bit about you and your various ministry roles in the Mission Center. Noel?

Noel Scherer 01:34

Well, I have just completed my second year as, uh, Mission Center President/Financial Officer for Prairie Bluffs Mission Center. So, some things are starting to look a little bit familiar, but, uh, plenty of learning curves still involved. But prior to this, I was a healthcare administrator and owner. I did that for almost 30 years. Um, my, along with some other family members, we operated continuing care retirement communities in Iowa. Um, so, as far as ministry roles, um, in the past, I've served as a congregation and district youth leader. I've been a worship planner at the congregation. I was pastor at Woodbine for 10 years. Uh, really enjoyed that. And, uh, I've been a counselor to the Mission Center President since we formed a mission center, so, for a while now. And I really didn't know what I was going to do two years ago after we transitioned out of, um, healthcare, but, uh, ended up in this role.

And I guess so far so good. I have a couple other interests that kind of relate. I like music. I play guitar and do vocal stuff. I sometimes coach youth sports, but I like sports all the way around, so, enjoy interacting with people in that way. And, then, just real quickly, I'll share a little bit about my family. I met my wife, Allison, at Graceland University. She hails from Niagara, Falls, Ontario. Um, also has a background, family background to being involved in the church. We have three children. Her daughter, Melissa, who is married to Zach Ferrara, live in Manhattan, New York. My son, Adam, just graduated and actually is working on his master's, and this last weekend, moved to Kansas City. So, he's doing well and is out in the working world, off the payroll, is what we call it. And then Nicole is a sophomore at Graceland University. So, all three of my kids went to Graceland, and we're, we're hoping that Nicole graduates. So, I guess that's a little bit about myself.

Robin Linkhart 03:42

Thanks, Noel. Janelle.

Janelle Anders 03:45

Hi. Well, I have been a member of the church my whole life, and I've been involved in ministry in a number of ways. I was the CFO, uh, really, actually a co-CFO for many years in the Lamoni Congregation. And I was a counselor to the Mission Center Bishop/Financial Officer for a while. And my next door neighbor in Lamoni was the youth minister for Lamoni Stake and, so, I ended up being in youth ministry a lot. It was a good training ground and I met a lot of good people, so, it was a great thing. Uh, my career, up to this point, I've been a CPA. I guess I'm still a CPA, but, um, now I'm practicing as a, as a minister. I was in Lamoni city government for about 25 years, which was a really good experience for, and training for this position. And, I guess, personally, I have three adult children and a daughter-in-law, and I have two grandchildren. And although I loved and still do love being a parent, I really love being a grandparent. It's, it's, it's a great gig.

Robin Linkhart 05:02

Thank you, Janelle. I can certainly connect with your feelings about the great gig of being a grandparent. And we know, Noel, that you're going to make an amazing grandpa one of these days.

Noel Scherer 05:12

Yeah, I'm ready.

Robin Linkhart 05:14

Yeah. Alrighty. So, Lamoni Heartland and Prairie Bluffs Mission Centers share Guthrie Grove Campground and have partnered in youth ministry ventures for many years. Before we get into the new ways you have partnered since coming on board as Mission Center officers, we want to hear about that journey, that early journey, and how it, how it's going now. So, first of all, what do you know about how the idea was first born and then took shape for the partnered campground usage and then partnering in youth ministry? Noel?

Noel Scherer 05:55

Well, it, it does, a lot of it relates to the church campground, Guthrie Grove, and what I know about that is, in the 50s, um, I believe it would have been the Council Bluffs-Omaha Stake kind of partnered with

Des Moines Stake, and there were some districts involved. And of course, my lineage, or whatever, would have been like Woodbine District that were also tied into that. But they were really looking for a place to develop, so they bought land, uh, near Guthrie Center, Iowa, um, really developed a nice campground there. And I think that decision, you know, back in the '50s, was really a driving force in our mission centers, um, jurisdictions developing close relationships because now, of course, they've been in place for decades, and it's kind of just, I think, keeps growing and growing stronger. You know, just before I would have been alive, there would have been reunions held on the hilltop in the town of Woodbine and, so, this was not a highly developed reunion facility. In fact, I, a lot of times I try to figure out how the bathroom and dining hall and food service worked, but, you know, it was, uh, um, roughing it, I think, is what you'd call it. But, you know, we have developed a very nice campground, and, um, it's, it's really, I think, been crucial in, especially for our younger generations, making connections, having wonderful camping experiences and, uh, lifelong relationships that have developed. So, it, it really was kind of that visionary idea of, Hey, we should join forces and really develop a nice, you know, location to hold these special education and camping experiences.

Robin Linkhart 07:46

So, that's really interesting, Noel, because early on in my time working with the church, um, and that was probably after I went into the field with Apostle Dale Luffman in 2007, I heard about this campground that had, like, remodeled hog huts to be cabins or some kind of dwelling. And I just remember thinking to myself, Oh, Lord save me. Please don't ever make me go to stay in the hog hut. Now, I've, I've been to Guthrie Grove several times and if, if you didn't know, you would never know there was a hog hut there previously. But, anyway, that's just kind of a funny story. Um, Janelle, what do you, what do you have to add to what, um, Noel has shared with us?

Janelle Anders 08:32

Well, I think he's pretty much right on. I do remember that, I think the whole reunion camping experience started in Woodbine or very near Woodbine. And, so, it makes a lot of sense to me that the Woodbine District along with, I think, the Sioux District and the North Central District, and I think they were partners in some way with this campground development and working with Des Moines Stake and, and Omaha Stake. I know Lamoni Stake came in. I don't have an exact date. I'm, I'm going to say the late '80s or early '90s is when they joined the group, and that's really about all I know about it.

Robin Linkhart 09:13

Well, that's a great reminder because we officially went into mission centers in, uh, 2003. We had a pilot mission center in the Midlands, what is now called the Midlands Mission Center, prior to that, but I actually had totally forgotten that we had stakes in districts before and that this campground was shared a long time before we became mission centers. So, that's great history to have. That, and that says a lot. I mean, partnering across jurisdictional lines is not always an easy thing and, you know, we have a long history and commitment to common consent, so, that means making sure a lot of people are around the table and having conversations. So, how is that partnership going now? We know that we now have these two mission centers that have subsumed these districts and stakes. Um, so, what are the benefits and what are the challenges from your perspective? Janelle.

Janelle Anders 10:13

Okay. Well, I, I think that our partnership is going really well. Everybody seems to work together for the good at Guthrie Grove. We all love Guthrie Grove. I would say that probably the biggest benefit is it's good stewardship to share a campground. We're in, you know, the Midwest, not, not high income territory, and, so, it makes a lot of sense to, to share the finances for, for this campground. To me, another benefit of being together and working together on this is affords us more persons to help develop and carry out program. And, so, um, I think we've benefited a lot because of all the people that have been involved in the ministry there at Guthrie Grove. I think that, course, um, the biggest challenge is finances, you know. It's expensive to, to run a campground, and, so, uh, we're always trying to look at ways to, to be more, more efficient and, and use the resource more to bring in more revenue.

Robin Linkhart 11:24

Thanks, Janelle. Noel, how about you?

Noel Scherer 11:27

Well, I also think it's fortunate that our two mission centers, you know, share this wonderful facility, this wonderful campground. It really originated, in my understanding is, six jurisdictions at one time shared this campground. So, it would have been Woodbine District, Sioux District, you know, at a certain point, Lamoni Stake, uh, Des Moines and Omaha stakes were, you know, in there at the beginning. But really a lot of jurisdictions and, you know, dynamics involved in holding reunions and events, and the mission center model, I think, has streamlined some of that, made it much more, um, easy to manage. But I, I am glad, as a mission center president that we have one campground shared with the mission center, as opposed to, uh, you know, I've talked to mission center presidents that have two camp grounds in their jurisdiction and, wow. You know, one's a handful, sharing one, so, that, that would be interesting. But financially and otherwise, you know, it certainly spreads the responsibility and stewardship out in a way that's more manageable and certainly more mutually beneficial. I also think, you know, there's a lot of respect, long standing relationships that are crucial in administering, you know, a campground. And no matter how good your setup is, campgrounds are a challenge to coordinate, in terms of scheduling, um, of course, in terms of financing, in terms of development, in terms of balancing needs. Um, so, our campground is still a bit of a challenge, but I'm glad that we have good communication, good partnership, um, a good way to work together. Um, I think an example of that might be, you know, after COVID, like many campgrounds, camper days, numbers were down. We had spent some reserves. And, you know, we started looking at this together, and kind of decided, and this began, really, with Janelle and myself and, uh, board presidents, um, discussing, you know, Hey, we have a property across the river from us that, you know, is valuable recreational timber property. It's not farm ground. It's, um, just located along the river that we don't plan to develop and really don't use that much. We just need a good neighbor. But I think it was crucial that we were able to get together as, you know, first two mission center presidents, then the board president, then the executive committee, then the board, and kind of working out the communication plans, the pros and cons, so that, when we kind of rolled out this way, because it really serves the mission of the campground to have, you know, we sold this property for, you know, a fairly good return, and actually found an ideal partner because it was the Department of Natural Resources. So, it's actually still public ground that we can hike and utilize and we have a bridge that accesses it. But I, I guess when I think about it, you know, when we first brought it up, a lot of people thought, Well, this is going to be, you know, this is going to ruffle feathers and rile

people up. And as far as our mission center, I think because we were able to communicate that we had thought through all the cons and, you know, there are some, that we were able to get this done and now have greatly enhanced our reserves that are able to support the existing, you know, campground and operational and facilities needs. So, that, that's just one example. But, you know, for youth camping, for everything else, I mean, I think people enjoy seeing one another and we have events out there that are just enhanced because of the additional people and, you know, diverse interests and skill sets.

Robin Linkhart 15:37

Alrighty, that, that all sounds fantastic. Um, Noel, you officially came on board January of 2023 and Janelle began onboarding August of 2023 and was officially appointed at the Fall 2023 mission center conference in Lamoni Heartland Mission Center. The two of you, from, from my perspective, the two of you connected early on and have already explored new ways of partnering and supporting one another in exploring mission possibilities. So, take us on that journey with you. Janelle, when did you and Noel first connect once you accepted the new position in Lamoni Heartland and how did that evolve into the partnership you have now?

Janelle Anders 16:27

Well, I think we officially met each other, of course, we knew, we'd known of each other, but I think we officially met each other when I went to a birthday party in Woodbine for a 90, 90-year-old mother of one of my, my long time camp and Graceland friends. Um, then, you know, and then we, we had Guthrie Grove committee meetings and, so, we met at those. We, we have friends that are on the committees and, uh, we were, we'd been talking, um, we, I think was actually, we went to Subway after a meeting and, and sat and, and visited with friends, Noel and I and, um, other friends, and I think we were there for two or three hours, and we just got to know each other quite well and became comfortable with each other, and it just kind of has, has grown from there. I, I would say that, um, we share a love for Guthrie Grove, our church and Graceland University. And, so, the friendship and the camaraderie that, that has developed and is still developing, um, has happened pretty easily.

Robin Linkhart 17:39

So, Noel, why don't you take it from there and fill in some more information?

Noel Scherer 17:44

Well, I certainly remember when Janelle was hired, um, so, I guess that would have been six or seven or whatever, eight months after I was, but, you know, we were kind of still swimming and learning and, and taking everything on. And I, I kind of thought, Okay, I, I'm going to give Janelle, you know, a month or two to kind of get settled because at this point I knew another phone call would, would, uh, probably just be a challenge. But, uh, yeah, once we, um, and again, I knew who Janelle was, but I wouldn't say that I knew her personally until after she had assumed this role. And it wasn't long after that that we kind of kept crossing paths and, uh, pretty quickly figured out that we could sort of learn this job together and bounce some of the challenges and brainstorm and, you know, things that we're working on. And, so, it's been very helpful and, and certainly is a good friendship. Um, I would say we probably talk once, once, possibly even twice a week, um, when things are going along as usual and, and it is very helpful. Um, I, I think one of the reasons it's helpful to kind of have because I almost view Lamoni

Heartland as a sister mission center, sharing the campground, having so many connections of people that grew up here, lived there, or their people grew up there and live here and went to camps together, that, um, it is very helpful. Uh, you know, this job can be overwhelming at times and, and part of that is just not so much overwhelming, but how do I prioritize which direction to go next, what to focus on next? Of course, it's also highly rewarding and, um, it's great dealing with people and seeing, you know, positive things happen. So, but it, you know, ultimately, it's really nice having a peer group or a peer to, um, just kind of share some of those joys and concerns. So, yeah, it's, it's been really nice having Janelle come on and we've, we've actually launched, I think, a number of new things, or maybe relaunched some things that existed that have been really beneficial and so, um, I feel good about that.

Robin Linkhart 20:09

Yeah. Um, it's been great. I mean, as, as we've said, you two came on board as new mission center officers and also the first time either one of you had been employed by the church in full time ministry and both of your mission centers are, are very active, and you both serve single line as the MCP, mission center president, and the financial officer, which is no small task. And, uh, watching, I mean, it's my joy to serve as the field apostle for your areas. So, it's been a, a joy to support you on this journey, but I remember seeing, uh, both of you just jumped in with your whole self into the new roles and, you know, took it on. And you both have such a heart and passion and, and deep love for the church, but a, a heart and passion for, for mission and you're all in. So, I, I remember telling Denise, uh, our field support minister, I said, These, these two mission center presidents are just going, they're a bundle of energy and they're both, like, ready to roll and partnering them together, we gotta' hold on here because we're going to have a wonderful ride of mission. And that has definitely been the case. And it's been wonderful that the two of you have partnered, uh, uh, personally in the way you have as companion ministers on the journey because having that, um, companion or friend that you can reach out to and run things by and, and truly be, you know, partners on the way is so helpful, especially when you're new in a role. Okay, now I want to hear about the new mission efforts and the specific partnered ministries, about what's happening there. So, um, let's start with the, uh, partnered ministries, the specific ones that are happening. Who wants to go first on this one?

Noel Scherer 22:17

I can. I've, (Great.) um, I think one of the things that struck out to me is almost immediately, when I became mission center president, I had a young adult say to me, We should have a joint reunion, like, for adults, um, you know, or for families, not just for, you know, youth camps, because we grew up going to camps together, and it would be nice if we had a forum to come back together at Guthrie and, you know, as, as younger adults with families or whatever the case may be, get together. And, you know, I kind of thought, well, you know, with already managing all the events we're having, um, that would be great. But, uh, really, this idea worked on me and I kind of pitched it pretty much immediately when Janelle came on board and, um, she was all for it. And, so, it ended up happening over a Labor Day and we did end up involving, um, a young adult whose idea it was. So, I don't think Janelle and I initially had Labor Day in mind. It's just that's the time that was open on the calendar and looked like it might work, but it really actually seemed to be very successful. We had over 100 participants the first year, which was this past Labor Day, at the event. And, um, you know, we had, I think universally heard, You've got to do this again and at the same time, um, which was something we would have been wondering about going into it, but, uh, so, that was really a positive and on a lot of these things

that we either that's a new event or that we relaunched, you know, Janelle and myself and my wife, Allison, was involved. We had to direct these events. Um, we were able to pull in, uh, one of the young adults was Ruth Knott Council Bluffs Central and she pulled in and was great and helped us direct. But, you know, to get it off to the right start, we actually felt like we need to help guide this and, you know, facilitate guest ministries. So, um, that was really exciting, a positive event. It ended up being a three night event. So, you know, that was about 300 user days on the campground. But there were a lot of new connections and new relationships. You know, we talk about these people that grew up together and knew each other while there were a lot of people that were there meeting new people, including myself. I met a lot of new adults from Lamoni Heartland and that was really unique and really fun to be able to be at an event like that. Um, you know, the other thing is, though, last year we relaunched men's retreat which hadn't happened for quite a number of years, since well before COVID. And because, you know, we had participation from Lamoni Heartland and Prairie Bluffs, we had a nice event. Um, we relaunched some events that, um, had been going for a while, such as an adult education reunion that happens during the week, often focuses on things like church history. But, again, to relaunch it, it was Janelle, myself, um, you know, kind of planning that event together and, and trying to build it up before we can maybe get others to help facilitate, directing the event. But, um, I, I don't know, I, in the last two years we've added 1200 camper days at the campground as, as prior to 2022 which we needed to add back because we lost even more than that, you know, over the period of COVID. But, um, to me, that, that was really positive that, you know, we've worked on a lot of events together. They've been successful and well attended and we've had a positive response. So, uh, I guess those are the examples I would offer.

Janelle Anders 26:33

Well, other things that we, we share together at Guthrie are the women's retreat, uh, which has been going on for quite a long time, and, um, many of our youth activities are, are done together. So, the, the kids, they don't just go to camp together. They also do different activities throughout the year together which is a really great thing for them, and helps them build relationships. So, you know, I, I think we do a lot of things together throughout the year. There are a lot of opportunities to be together, get to know each other.

Robin Linkhart 26:33

Janelle. And then on top of that, you each have a, what I would say, a big, uh, reunion for your specific mission centers. It's not uncommon. Um, I've been a guest minister at both of those a couple times over the years. It's not uncommon for someone, for example, from Prairie Bluffs, who they, they couldn't make the calendar work for them that year, they'll swing over to attend Lamoni Heartland Mission Center. But I, I just want to highlight that, in addition to all these other partnered and, uh, individual, um, ways that you're using the campgrounds. You ha, both sponsor a really nice, large reunion for, uh, on behalf of your mission center. So, now I want to hear about the new mission efforts emerging in your perspective, um, mission centers and how having each other as, uh, mission conversation partner has empowered you in your creative thinking, for example, and supported you as you fan the flames of mission in your own unique mission center? Noel?

Noel Scherer 28:25

Well, you know, I have learned a lot and I think Prairie Bluffs Mission Center folks can learn a lot from some of the things that Lamoni Heartland Mission Center has in place, some ministries, some groups that they already have explored and developed, um, that, that maybe we haven't so much. And one example that would really just be, like, exploring the enduring principle, sacredness of creation, where I, I know that they have people with education and experience in recycling, in care of the earth, and are involved in a lot of different ways in things of that nature. So, that is something that has triggered my interest and I've learned from these people and, also, you know, it's a resource, people with talents and experience and education in these areas. They aren't too far away from us. So, that's one. Along the exact same lines, though, I think Lamoni Heartland has done a wonderful job of promoting unity in diversity. Um, they've made intentional efforts to be inclusive. And, for me, I, I've looked to Lamoni Heartland as a mission center that has some really great people with skill sets and unique a, ability to teach, to educate in these areas and, uh, although I don't know as much about it, you know, they, they've actually have organized committees and, and, uh, groups that work to promote these principles and go out to congregations and have done educations at the campground with our directors, staff, board, um, youth camping committee. So, these are some of the examples. One other example I'd give is recently Lamoni Heartland has a really great SALT, which is, um, leader education program. Um, I've never done it, so I don't know all the details, but, um, I know that Janelle and the Mission Center extended invitation to some of the people in our mission center to participate in their leadership or development program in, in these education events. And I was really just kind of blown away by that, that, you know, there's a lot of effort and planning that's gone into that. And here goes out to the invitation that people from our Mission Center were given an opportunity to participate if that fit the bill for them. So, I, I think those are some of the things that come to mind real quickly. You know, another thing that has been launched and, um, Allison and I have got to actually be directors of it, uh, the last two years, is we have a, um, post-secondary retreat right after the first of the year. So, this is for young people that have graduated from high school. So, basically college age, you know, up to whatever, but kind of on the younger side of college age or young adult. And, uh, this thing has really, kind of ballooned the last couple years and it is really both mission centers, again, kind of making these connections and then, um, these young adults themselves, you know, texting and interacting to say, Hey, I'm going to be there. Are you? So, this past year, despite inclement weather and having a number of people cancel, we had 40 individuals in that age group there. Um, I think we had about 52 total. We had some, what I'd call, young adults, but they're not young adults that are in that age range helping teach classes and do things, so, um, with the group. So, that was pretty awesome, too. But we just have a lot of positive things going on. So, um, it, it's kind of hard to narrow it down to one thing, but, you know, there's a lot of strong joint activities because we're together. There's unity of leadership and members.

Robin Linkhart 32:37

Thanks, Noel. Janelle.

Janelle Anders 32:40

We have several new things, uh, coming. Uh, one, one that started last year after mission center conference was we have a, a climate emergency response committee and they have done a really amazing job of helping all of us, as people and as congregations, be more aware of what we can do to be kind to our environment. And, um, I'm really heartened by the initiative that they've taken. Uh, as

Noel kind of mentioned, this job is too much for one person, really, and it's, it's nice when some, when somebody will step up with, with an initiative and, and be willing to take it and run with it and this is an area that I'm very excited that we're more involved in and new activities are happening. We also have a new initiative that's beginning this year. Um, it's called Citizen Diplomacy. And, actually, we've met with Noel about, about Prairie Bluffs being involved in this as well because we think probably together we can be better and stronger. So, you know, I'm looking forward to that. And, you know, Citizen Diplomacy is, is a new initiative for us and it basically involves developing friendships with someone from another nation. Uh, particularly we're kind of particularly drawn to nations where we might have or our countries might have a troubled relationship. So, the person to person interaction is pretty important. Uh, the, the soul of Citizen Diplomacy demonstrates the power of building relationships to bridge significant differences. It gives rise to greater understanding, healing and inspiration that can serve as a foundation for enriched relationships and more peaceful international relations. The person in our mission center who's leading this initiative is Chuck Montgomery and he has been involved in Citizen Diplomacy for over 20 years. And Chuck and I firmly believe that Community of Christ is uniquely suited and gifted for Citizen Diplomacy. I'm pretty sure you did a podcast with Chuck to talk about this and we're just very excited to be getting this going. So, that is one of the new things that's, that's coming in our, in our, uh, area and we hope that Prairie Bluffs people can be involved as well. One thing I would say that, um, Noel and I talked a lot about our mission center conferences when it, you know, when it came time he was, he was already experienced by the time I had my first one. So, I was asking lots of questions about what to do with this. And one of the things I gleaned from, from our interaction was that theirs is a two-day event. They do their legislation on one day and they do worship and such on another. And they do educate, I guess they do their worship and their, their legislation on one day, they do their education and, um, social gathering on the other day. And I like that idea, and, so, I have been talking to my mission center leadership about doing the same thing and I, I think that is going to happen for us this year. And, so, um, I'm very excited about that. Another thing that we've done together as, as mission centers that is going to be a new thing, it's, it'll, actually, I think it is happening in March this year, is a, is a youth camp called Camp 101. It'll be a weekend activity and it is a camp that is for the younger than camper age. So, the, the first through third graders and they will bring an adult buddy and they'll come to camp and they'll get to experience camp. And we, I, I first experienced that when I was out in California. They were starting it out there and I loved the idea. And I had friends who took their grandchildren to it and they were, they loved it and the kids loved it and they, you know, when, when we went to reunion and the granddaughter, my friend, you know, knew her way around and felt very comfortable being there. It's like, That's what it's all about. We need to do that. And, so, I talked to our, my, my youth minister who was new as well. He had started, uh, two months before me, so, we're learning lots of things together. Um, I talked to him about the idea and he was very excited about it, and, and luckily, the youth camping committee jumped on it. So, you know, we're offering some new things and trying to reach out to to new people, build more relationships and, and get the hook started earlier.

Robin Linkhart 38:06

Thank you. I, I love, I love hearing about all these things from both of you. So exciting. So, what have you learned during your experience as leaders of mission? I know you, you've both been on for a relatively short time. Uh, Janelle, how about you?

Janelle Anders 38:25

So, I would say, um, that even though I was involved in the mission center my whole adult life, there's just so much to learn about the administrative side. It's very different than being a member or even a, just a participant. And, so, it's been interesting learning the administrative side. Um, it's been, it's been really interesting learning how big the job is as well. They tell you when you're coming on that, you know, well, this is two jobs and, in my case, and I think (. . .) to it kind of is like what three people did before, now we're kind of doing. Um, so, I've learned that it is too big for one person. But luckily, my mission center is full of generous and capable people that are willing to share their skills and, and manage pieces of ministry in our area. And, so, I feel like I'm very blessed that we can do so much because we have other people who step up on a volunteer basis and, and provide ministry in our area. I, I really enjoy the relationships that I'm developing with the people here. It's, it's one of the big resort, rewards of this position. And, you know, I'm deepening old relationships and building new ones. And I, I appreciate that very much and having the opportunity to do that. And, you know, I have to say, I, I'm going to include the Prairie Bluffs Mission Center people in this piece as well because I really love the ease that we seem to have in, in being together and ministering together and making things happen together. So, um, it's really cool to watch things develop and to see how the ministry is being carried out.

Robin Linkhart 40:30

Thanks, Janelle. Noel.

Noel Scherer 40:33

You know, I think I've learned that there's, there's more to this position than I realized. And, again, I say that having thought that I knew a lot because I've, I've been involved in the mission center, you know, leadership group, or a counselor to the Mission Center president since the beginning, but in assuming this role, you know, I, I always give Dave Ettinger a big hug when I see him. He was my predecessor and did a really good job, you know, transitioning and, um, providing some training and still is available when, you know, you need someone to ask a question or bounce an idea off of, but it, there is a little more to it than I realized. But, and I would say, you know, at times it's a little overwhelming, and as much as anything, just kind of knowing which direction should I go because there's so many good things that you could allocate your time to do, but it's, you know, you can only go so many directions at once. And, uh, the other thing is, like Janelle said, I just, it really is rewarding and an honor and a privilege, you know, to interact with people and see how dedicated, how good our members are. And this really is across the age groups, you know. I just come off of, you know, a couple weeks ago being with, you know, the post secondary group and just, we have amazing, wonderful people in that age group. And, you know, the thing that occurs to me is it's very hopeful, it's very encouraging, but, you know, how do we kind of make sure we've engaged and empowered them to, you know, carry this on, this dedication and this wonderful thing that Community of Christ is in it, to the communities, you know, and, and beyond our church walls. So, those are things I've learned, you know. I just, for the most part, I've learned, you know, to have a great appreciation for, you know, members out there that are congregational leaders and, you know, providing hands-on ministry that serves our mission.

Robin Linkhart 42:48

Thanks, Noel. So, Noel, what do you know now that you wish you had known when you first took this leadership role?

Noel Scherer 42:55

I, I'm not sure there's anything specific, you know, just that you do have to delegate. And really, I'd call that more like relationship building and partnering with people who have talents and willingness to serve. Um, I already mentioned this, but I had a really good mentor, um, in, you know, our mission center president who transitioned and trained me, David Ettinger, so, he did take a lot of steps to make this as smooth a transition as possible and, um, he's a tough act to follow, for sure. But, um, you know, we have good people out here in our mission center and they're very supportive. And that really, a, as crazy as this might sound when I, I didn't know what I was going to do when we sold our business and I transitioned out of, you know, 30 years of healthcare administration, but I kind of said to myself, I want to do something that's, you know, really rewarding and fun. And, you know, so far, I would say that this position fits that bill. It's a lot, but it is rewarding and fun. And maybe the one thing that I wish I would have known and I still wish I knew, is just there's a little bit of an aspect to, you need to be able to know, sometimes, how to turn off the switch, you know, and, and take a day or an afternoon off or maybe on some occasion, a week. And it's really easy to, even if you're at home watching TV in the evening, just say, I'm going to reply to this email now. I'm going to do this job now. And, so, sometimes there's a little bit of an aspect to that that I'm still kind of trying to learn balance. But, um, on the whole, I've, I've been, I've enjoyed what's going on and it's really is a position about learning something new every day and, um, learning to develop relationships, you know, kind of continually with new people and your new friends and your old friends. So,

Robin Linkhart 45:12

Thanks, Noel. Janelle, how about you? What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first started in this role?

Janelle Anders 45:20

Well, I would have to say that, you know, I kind of wish I'd known more of the administrative stepping stones. That's been the, the big challenge for me, is finding out the proper church way to do some of these things. But, um, other than that, probably, like Noel said, you know, working on life balance is pretty important and I knew that would be a challenge. And I, you know, I was self-employed most of my career, so, I understand the whole having to set limits, but, you know, it's, it's kind of hard when somebody calls you and needs something, and so, um, so, that would be something I wish I was better at.

Robin Linkhart 46:04

Thanks. So, what are your hopes for Community of Christ as you look into the future? Noel?

Noel Scherer 46:13

Um, I, I'm really fortunate that I have now, I guess, three children who are in the young adult age range. And, so, I, I kind of am trying to look at things from that perspective, youth, young adult, you know. And I just, I'm really encouraged by, you know, the great people we have out there in our youth programs, in, in our young adult groups. And I, I think the challenge, you know, for us is, what gives me a lot of

hope is, you know, engaging them, finding, you know, and, and the church, the way we gather, the way, um, we worship, the way we do some things are going to look a little different, maybe, in the future, but finding the right way to engage, empower, empower them to become involved and that really is kind of an exploration or a journey. I have a lot of hope about it, you know, as we involve them, but that's kind of the journey that I think our mission centers are on right now. Um, but as far as, you know, the mission of the church, the enduring principles, the mission initiatives, I mean, you know, I, I think we've hit it out of the park and I think our young people know and feel blessed to be part of a faith community that proclaims Jesus, but is so inclusive and in some ways, so different from some of the other Christian communities that we have a lot to be proud of in what we believe, in the worldwide structure that we have, in the relationships that we have, not just in congregations, but in mission centers and across jurisdictional lines. And even with World Conference coming up, and, you know, trying to get as many young adults to come to conference so they can see that picture and that part of what, what we are and what we strive to be. So, I have a lot of hope and it's really in the future and our future leaders.

Robin Linkhart 48:14

Thanks, Noel. Janelle, how about you?

Janelle Anders 48:18

Well, my hope for Community of Christ is that we can continue to evolve into the community that we are called to be.

Robin Linkhart 48:28

Well said. Thank you. I always like to have this last question. Is there anything else that you want to share today that I haven't already asked you about? Janelle?

Janelle Anders 48:41

I don't think so. How about, you Noel?

Noel Scherer 48:44

Um, you know, the thing that came to mind when I thought about this was just the idea that, and I, I feel like most members and most congregations have a sense of this, but the congregation level is incredibly important. You know, that's where the tire hits the pavement. It's where lives are impacted. But our mission center level is really important, too. This is one of the levels of Community of Christ that makes our church unique, that we can have an educational event and have, you know, 50 or 100 people come and we can see friendly faces that are old and new and we can share in dialogue, you know, outside the walls of our own community or congregation and interact, whether it be from, you know, summer camps, youth programming, education events, conferences, fellowship. That level of Community of Christ is really unique and wonderful. So, I hope our members, you know, see how important the mission center level is. And although I'm in the throes of the mission center level, uh, now, I see it, I think, even more clearly, being in this position, but I've always felt that way. And I think the same things apply to the world church level. You know, that as a denomination, we need to recognize, really how blessed we are that we can be connected to people, you know, across the globe. I mean, we have people from a lot of different nations, Africa, zooming in on Sundays to some of the worships happening in our mission center. And that is just such a unique and wonderful dynamic

because it does give us that unity in diversity and that perspective that we gain so much for. So, you know, it's a little self serving, but, um, I would really plug our mission center and world church levels being vibrant is, is a key to Community of Christ's mission.

Robin Linkhart 50:58

Thank you, Noel. And I would say that deep, uh, felt and lived out sense of the global connection across the church is such a blessing and it's so unique a, among denominations, Christian denominations. Uh, thank you so much, both of you, for being with us here today.

Noel Scherer 51:21

Thank you.

Janelle Anders 51:22

You're welcome. My pleasure.

Robin Linkhart 51:24

To hear more, check out our What's Brewing series for more stories about how Community of Christ is living out mission across the church. If you want to learn more about Citizen Diplomacy, listen to episode 670, that's 670, Citizen Diplomacy with Chuck Montgomery. 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.