

Extra Shot | Matt Frizzell: Open Letter to Community of Christ USA

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Community of Christ, politics, executive orders, World Conference resolutions, justice, peace, human rights, Christ's peace.

SPEAKERS

Matt Frizzell

Blake Smith 00:27

Hey, Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, Project Manager for Project Zion Podcast with an Extra Shot episode featuring Matt Frizzell. Recently, Matt wrote an open letter to the church and posted it on YouTube. You may or may not have seen that already, but Matt gave us permission to cross post this for Project Zion Podcast so that we could increase the listeners who get to hear the letter. The letter kind of speaks for itself. So, without further ado, I'll turn it over to Matt.

Matt Frizzell 00:58

My name is Matt Frizzell, and I live in Chicago. I'm an aspiring disciple of Jesus Christ. It's Valentine's Day 2025. This is an open letter to Community of Christ, USA, concerning Community of Christ' voice in current politics. Over the last few weeks, I spoke to friends and colleagues deeply concerned. They are disturbed by the news of executive orders and actions targeting immigrants, American citizens, and government agencies. These actions seem unprecedented in our lifetimes. They are frustrated at Community of Christ's silence. While other churches are making statements, even suing the administration, they wonder where their church is. Some have asked about statements from the USA Apostles, First Presidency, or other World Church teams. I am empathetic. I also want to speak out with our own voice. We already have. WCR 1161, Human Freedom and Injustice, was adopted in 1980. It states that "we consider it the requirement of the gospel to proclaim justice." WCR 1161 calls for our commitment to pray and work to eliminate inhumane conditions that nations and peoples heap upon the poor, the dispossessed, and the imprisoned. It recognizes discrimination by race, tribe, age, or sex limits freedom. WCR 1161 calls the church to call on national governments to increase their efforts to secure conditions of peace, justice, liberty, and to support international agencies which seek the same. This is the voice of the church. WCR 1177, entitled Peace, calls the church to uphold law which support individual and group dignity and freedom, and to oppose oppression and tyranny. The resolution goes further to state that it is a "Christian duty to participate responsibly in governmental processes and to support good and wise people in positions of governmental leadership." (WCR 1177 references Doctrine and Covenants 95:2a-d) It reminds us that we, the church, share responsibility for the world's conditions. WCR 1177 exhorts us to speak "out against human inequity wherever and whenever it is found." It emphasizes that "peace is not attained by mere nonparticipation in violence." Rather, "the best form of Christian witness strives to promote peace and remove the causes of

aggression.” I commend anyone concerned to revisit this important resolution. WCR 1226 Human Diversity was adopted in 1992. It is a clear and unequivocal affirmation of human diversity. It calls the church to “accept the responsibility to resist fear and hate in all forms and to strive continuously to eliminate expressions of prejudice and discrimination.” WCR 1184 Human Rights adopted in 1984 states “Community of Christ affirms that all people have essential rights, including the right to peaceful assembly, free speech, specific cultural identities and self-determination, the formation of intentional mutually cooperative human communities, freedom from fear and threats to personal safety and well-being, and the right to fulfill personal potential through continued growth and development.” This is our voice as a church. Those of us who forget or ignore this voice ignore our politics and who we are. I encourage individuals with a passion for the politics of the Gospel to review each World Conference Resolution (WCR) I’ve included in my letter. I’ve provided a list of thirty resolutions concerning diversity and inclusion, anti-racism, basic human rights, peace and justice making, indigenous rights, climate emergency, refugees, and capital punishment. These resolutions unite our theology and politics with the ethics of Christ’s peace. In a situation of intense partisanship, consumer news driven by profits, and unregulated social media, we can have clarity. Jesus turned his face to Jerusalem, the center of Israel’s spiritual and political life. (Luke 9:51) Followers will do the same in our own cultures and contexts. No passage of the bible is free from politics. Every book and passage speak to us of God’s vision for creation and society, God’s covenant with the people of Israel, God’s love for the world and Christ’s mission. The peace of Jesus Christ lies beyond political party. The Gospel’s prophetic voice also speaks directly to politics today. We claim this story as our story as people of Restoration. In conclusion, I invite the Community of Christ USA to reacquaint ourselves, study, and embrace our church’s collective voice. World Conference Resolutions reflect Community of Christ’s voice as a body. They state our values and inform our politics with the ethics of Christ’s peace. Community of Christ is a global movement with historical roots in American democracy. Let us use the words, witness, and vision of our shared prophetic voice. Blessings, Matthew J. Frizzell

Blake Smith 06:52

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