

Intro Music ([00:00](#)):

Music

Josh Mangelson ([00:17](#)):

Welcome to the project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Carla ([00:28](#)):

Hello and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host Carla Long, and today you are listening to Percolating on Faith, our God Shot series We are on chapter 12 Migliore's book. It's called Proclamation, Sacrament, and Ministry. And as always I have Tony and Charmaine Chavela Smith to talk to us. So hi, Tony and Charmaine.

Charmaine ([00:53](#)):

Hi Carla. How are you doing?

Carla ([00:55](#)):

I'm great. How are you two?

Charmaine ([00:57](#)):

We're doing fine. We had a snow day this weekend.

Tony ([01:00](#)):

We did. We've got snow and ice in independence, Missouri, and that always makes this Michigander very happy.

Carla ([01:06](#)):

It sure does. Oh, and it's snow days. Hopefully you just had enough food so you could just snuggle in.

Charmaine ([01:12](#)):

Never a problem in this house.

Carla ([01:15](#)):

Amen sister. Amen.

Charmaine ([01:17](#)):

We love food, so we're good. We're good. Yup.

Carla ([01:20](#)):

Well life is good then. So if you, if you have to stay inside, I'm sure you did nothing. I'm sure you just snuggled up in blankets and ate food all day.

Charmaine ([01:28](#)):

Actually, it was our chance to get caught up on a whole bunch of things. So spent a lot of time at the computer, but good stuff done.

Carla ([01:37](#)):

That's so true. Listener, I don't know if you know how busy Charmaine and Tony are, but they teach a ton of different classes for Graceland University in the master's degree program and in the undergrad program. And they are always, always doing something. There's never a dull moment in their lives.

Charmaine ([01:53](#)):

And it's usually because we're behind. We're always doing something.

Tony ([01:57](#)):

And, and we should say for us, a snow day is another day, another word for a work day. But it's a work day at home when you're around large bags of potato chips.

Carla ([02:06](#)):

Oh, well there ain't nothing about that. There ain't no work about that. I mean, uh, well, I already mentioned that today's podcast, our God Shot episode is about proclamation, sacrament, and ministry. And so I was just, uh, let's just jump into it. So how are these three topics interrelated? Or maybe you should talk a little bit about what they are. I mean, people probably think they know what proclamation, sacrament, and ministry are. But maybe just for our terms, what are we referring to when referred to them? And then what is the interrelationship?

Tony ([02:40](#)):

Sure. For starters, proclamation has to do with the way the church declares the good news of God's love in Christ. And sacraments would be those sacred rights that in some sense embody aspects of the good news of God's love. And then ministry has both two senses. One sense is that the whole church is called after the model of Jesus to be, to be a servant to the world. And then with within the church, some people are called and set apart to specific act, uh, actions of service, you know, or ordained ministry. So those three things are, are interconnected and they, they sort of fit, uh, where we are in this series. Last, our last podcast was on ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. And so proclamation, sacraments and ministry are sort of a subset of that. The, the things that the church is called to do. So that's kind of the big picture here. Does that help Carla?

Carla ([03:44](#)):

Oh, it definitely does. And I'm so glad you brought up the church part because I mean when we talked about the church, we, we spoke in fairly general terms. We got some specifics in there too. But like this is way more specific than just talking about the church, which I think is really important.

Charmaine ([03:59](#)):

Right? And another way of, of looking at the relationship of these three is that they are all about Christ. The proclamation part is about telling about who Christ is, what he does, his invitation, uh, the kind of life that we are invited to. The sacraments are the embodiment of Christ's ministry. Many, uh, not all of the sacraments are patterned on the ways in which Christ interacted with others, um, of, you know, hands of healing, hands of feeding, hands of blessing, all of those kinds of things. And then ministry are,

you know, is the ways in which each of us is called to live out Jesus' life for the sake of the world and those around us. So that's a, that's another, uh, way we can look at as Jesus says, the focus of all three. And the church being, you know, the, as, as each of these parts proclamation, sacraments and ministry are a part of church and church life. Um, the church itself is to be an expression of Christ's, um, good news and Christ's action in the world. So that's maybe another easy way to, to think about how these are, are tied to together

Tony ([05:36](#)):

And so maybe, uh, following up on that, a place to start then is with the incarnation. Um, and I should say Community of Christ theology aligns fully with the classical Christian theology in terms of a focus on the incarnation. And so, Migliore points that Christ is the primordial sacrament. And, and this is kind of, this is language he borrows from Vatican II that second Vatican Council. Christ is the, the primary primordial sacrament, God's own eternal divine word becoming flesh in Jesus of Nazareth and embodied living in Palestine, teaching, eating, suffering, dying and being raised. And so, so, uh, incarnation is at the core or the, it's maybe I should say it's the foundation of proclamation, sacraments and ministry. And so if Christ is word made flesh, then in the, in the life of the church, proclamation is the word proclaimed.

Tony ([06:50](#)):

And then sacraments would be like the word and enacted. And that's kind of a dramatic terminal. It should be dramatic cause the sacraments are dramatic rights in some respects. And then, um, ministry is the word extended that is through, through the flesh and blood actions and service of the church. And, uh, through the whole church, through ordained ministers, the, the word is extended to the world. So, so that's kind of ties all three of these aspects of ecclesiology back to the incarnation which in lots of ways we've just recently been reminded of and celebrated in, in advent. So, right as we do this podcast, we have, we have just epiphany is right behind us. We're now entering ordinary time, but very, very recently in our memory is the celebration of the coming of Christ into the world. Which typically is a time we, we think about the incarnation.

Carla ([07:55](#)):

So my math brain is kind of going like in a kind of a picture of form. So like Christ is within the proclamation, Christ is within the sacrament and Christ is within the ministry. And so we, Christ helps us with all three of those. It sounds like Christ has to be present in all three of those in order for those things to be as they should be.

Charmaine ([08:16](#)):

Yeah. I think more specifically, Christ is the focus of them, both the initiator and the focus. Yeah. And the things shared [inaudible] yeah.

Tony ([08:28](#)):

Yeah. I mean the, the church exists to embody, to, uh, to mediate. What God has offered the world in Christ. And so, yeah so Christ Christ is the litmus test here, uh, of, of all these things. And that's, and that's pretty good because when you think about proclamation in terms of preaching, sometimes our sermons ain't so good. And when you think about sacraments, sometimes we mess up and make little mistakes and, or, or go or go, for instance, into a sacramental service feeling. I'm totally not with this today. And then sometimes as in terms of terms of the ministry of the church, we feel broken and

unable to really, you know, represent. And yet if Christ is present in all three, then that's totally good news. We, we need that because then it's not about us. It's about him.

Carla ([09:23](#)):

Yeah. Thank Christ. So, you know, I can really relate to everything you're saying as a minister in Community of Christ for the last 15 years. Wow. I know that's, my parents are thrilled I've held down a job for so long. Um, I, I can totally relate to what you're saying and because in Community Christ, of course we have proclamation, sacrament and ministry. And so I wondered if you could talk about it in a community of Christ kind of setting.

Tony ([09:55](#)):

Sure. I, I'll start with proclamation. The, the primary way that the word is proclaimed is in, is in preaching and preaching based on scripture. And so that's why, for example, in Community of Christ, the lectionary is really important. The lectionary helps us stay grounded in the whole, the whole drama of redemption. And in the Bible especially, and not just in a few favorite passages. And so, um, proclamation happens when, when through human speech, in some sense, the, the good news of God's grace and love is born to people and the, the effectiveness of a sermon. It's kind of a tricky thing there. Community of Christ doesn't have a long, strong tradition of good exegetical preaching, but we're, we're getting there. We're working on that. Um, but you know, if you think about times when in a sermon something has just lit up, a few words that a preacher offered to you just lit up your life in some way so you could see yourself in relation to God in relation to your past in relation to your vocation.

Tony ([11:14](#)):

That's, that's a moment when proclamation, uh, really happens. And the Living Word Christ comes through the broken human words of the preacher. And so, um, that's kind of, I guess proclamation in a nutshell. Uh, I can think of different times in my life when, when a phrase, a sentence, a testimony within a sermon, uh, just opened the door for me to experience my life before God in a whole new way. So, go ahead Charmaine.

Charmaine ([11:45](#)):

I think I would want to just pick up on something that Tony referenced, uh, there for a little bit and that is that within Community of Christ for a really long time, we were really more theme oriented when it came to how we use scripture and how we preached and more, um, using scripture more like a proof text or to, you know, to be an excuse to talk about whatever it was we wanted to talk about. Um, and that, that in some ways, um, that really I think caused us as a church to not really trust the whole of scripture and to trust that it is a strong basis upon which the proclamation of what God is doing through Christ, um, can be trusted. And so I think it's really been important that in the last 20, 30 years, uh, the church has been so much more intentional about not only using scripture as our primary focus for worship helps and, and our weekly themes, um, but also equipping ministers with the tools to really dig into, to understand what scripture is as a whole, uh, and how to best use it with knowledge about its, its historical context and which parts of scripture are timeless and which are time-bound.

Charmaine ([13:19](#)):

And so I think we're, we're, we're very much on the growing side of understanding the connection between scripture and our proclaimed word, our preaching on Sunday mornings. And there's lots of places where it hasn't caught on and, uh, or where there's, it's just, you know, kind of beginning. But I

think as a whole that sense that, um, who Christ is, can be, um, mind, richly mind in scripture and that that's a really good place to start when we're gonna preach is it's a reliable place. I think that's something that's been, um, really strengthened in our self understanding in the church. And I hope we'll continue to grow.

Tony ([14:15](#)):

Yeah, there, there are lots of places for, for growth in Community of Christ in terms of, of the, the actual ministry of the preaching of the word. Um, I, a lot of people nowadays, uh, have a kind of a negative feeling about the sermon and I would like to maybe push back on that a little bit. I understand. I would rather say it's not that I dislike sermons, I just dislike bad ones. And I think one of the things that is to lots of people about sermons is that a lot of times what passes as a sermon is not proclamation. Proclamation must always in some sense declare the gift of God that comes to us in Christ. If it's, if it's a moral harangue about what you didn't do, what you must do, what you ought to do, what you haven't done, that's, that's not the good news.

Charmaine ([15:16](#)):

Or if it's just a feel good chicken soup for the soul kind of thing, but not connected to the reality of God in our lives and God's desire for us to know that we are, are loved and known and called, you know, then, then, you know, we've kind of given up our, our responsibility to point to that for the, for the sake of feel good. And, and that's, you know, that's another one of our cultural things is that somehow what happens in a worship service, we should come away feeling good and, and sometimes that's the case and I think, um, whenever the spirit is at work there's, a feeling part of ourself that is engaged. Um, but in the proclamation part, the, in the sermon, in that part of our worship sometimes, um, the good news is the good news is something that makes us uncomfortable, makes us see, helps us see parts of ourself that need change or acknowledgement. So, um, yeah, so I'm sorry for jumping in. That was an Avenue that I thought, you know, we sometimes don't talk about that.

Tony ([16:33](#)):

And I, I think, you know, for, for me, there's this, this principle I learned from the theologian Paul Tillich's writings. He says, the gospel is always first about a gift before it is about a demand or a task. And so, so much that passes for preaching has that exactly in the wrong order that the sermon is about the task, the demands and so on. And the, the gift sense of what the gospel is, is, is absent. And so it's really important for us to turn that order around and make sure that, that, um, the, the proclamation of the word is that it's about Jesus, that it's about the gift and that it's about 12 to 15 minutes.

Carla ([17:22](#)):

Well, amen brother. Oh, you made me forget what I was going to say. Oh wait, let me see if I can pull it back again. That was, that was an excellent, Oh yeah, I'm there. So a lot of times before we really started pushing the lectionary and using the lectionary, people would like pull from so many different scriptures to prove their point. And that is not proclamation. That's it. It's, it's us. Putting our agenda onto what God is saying. It's like we're speaking for God. And so I've always been pushing and really trying to help people understand that, you know, the depth of scripture is huge. You know, you can take 10 verses and you can write a 50 page paper on them. And I'm not kidding about that. You can actually write a 50 page paper over 10 verses. So certainly you could have a 12 to 15 minute, uh, message or sermon over these 10 verses. You don't need to pull from other parts of the Bible. And I just, and that's just really, that's probably my soapbox for the day, cause it drives me insane when people do that.

Charmaine ([18:35](#)):

Well. And I think, um, this kind of points to one of those little checklist things that we can do when, when we're going to preach. And Tony and I have a little list of four or five but, but one of them is that, am I making the focus me and my ideas or thoughts or am I making the focus God or Jesus or what the spirit is doing? Um, and, and that quite often when we're picking scriptures from everywhere, we're bolstering some of, some idea of ours to, to impress people or to convince people. Um, and quite often it, it isn't first and foremost about, you know, who God is and what God is inviting us to or work God, recognizing where God is at work or what God is calling us to, to be open to. So anyhow, I, that's, that's one of those places where our egos, I mean we're, we're not quite to talking about the ministry part, but that's a, that's a huge challenge for all of us.

Charmaine ([19:47](#)):

You know, we're human and we want to feel special. And, um, in roles of ministry, we may, we may put that onto our roles in ministry to make us feel special or sometimes superior to, or better than a or a, you know, an authority over others. And, um, and it's, you know, that's, that can be a dangerous place. So we really do need to have some self checking mechanisms, whether it's in preaching or whether it's in how we address other people, um, from the pulpit or in other settings. Um, that, that we keep making sure it's not about us. This is, this is not, um, a chance for self aggrandizement or, or, um, yeah. Or, or making others listen to us. Your captive audience, you know, that have to have to hear us for the next, how many ever minutes.

Tony ([20:48](#)):

That proof texting method you're talking about? Uh, one of my professors are preaching years ago call that he, his term for it was a string of pearls and uh, I'm not even sure it's on a string. Usually it's more like a bunch of pearls rolling around on a table. But the problem with that, a problem with that is that it doesn't help us enter any particular story. It's like what if I gave you 30 random lines from random movies? Some romantic comedy, some science fiction, some, you know, Western, some, uh, horror. I just gave you lines out of movies. Which of the, can you enter any of those stories? No, not really. You're bouncing back and forth instead of, instead of the, instead of for the preacher allowing, allowing the word who is the living Christ to make connections with you through one story.

Tony ([21:44](#)):

Uh, and to connect your story to that story. That that's I think when, when preaching is at its most effective and it's best I should say there for each of the things we're going to talk about. There's, you know, there's a paradox to, and that is that the, the coming of the word in each of these aspects of the church life is not dependent upon how good we do. Um, so sometimes even in the rottenest of sermons, the living word will make an appearance. And that's, that's good news, right? Uh, that's the, the, the word, the word doesn't depend on us always getting it right. At the same time, it's really important for us to, to, uh, do our, do our very best to, to make what happens in that some way between, I'll, I'll extend it somewhere between 12 and 20 minutes of preaching that, that we, we do our very best to help help listeners actually connect their stories to the story in which the living word wants to be present.

Carla ([22:48](#)):

I think that's really, really important. Um, and I appreciate you both you both saying that. Um, I, I, I'm going to say, you know, you've talked about the word is present even in the worst sermons. And I, I will

tell you the opposite of that is that I, there are times when I'm like, Oh my gosh, this sermon is so kick-butt it's going to be amazing. And it doesn't connect at all. So, you know, maybe maybe I put too much of myself in there or something. So there's, there are moments when you're just like, I, I don't know what I'm doing anymore. But thankfully Christ is present most of the time in what you're saying.

Tony ([23:27](#)):

That's a good, that's a really good point. Reminds me of a line in, in uh, going back to what the sixth or seventh or sixth century to Saint Gregory the Great, here's this book on pastoral care. It's a classic book on pastoral care and he makes this statement about preaching in which he says, I'm going to paraphrase it for you. He says, you know, when, when, when to priest, he's saying, when you're preaching and you feel like you've got an eating rat out of the palm of your hands, that's the danger zone for you. You've already, you've already stepped into a danger zone when you think you've got them right now. That is not what preaching is about and it's not about you getting anything. It's about us making space for the word to do what the word will do.

Carla ([24:09](#)):

Oh my gosh, what a killjoy that guy was, man. Dang it.

Charmaine ([24:16](#)):

Maybe that's what he was great at. Gregory, the great.

Tony ([24:20](#)):

I am the greatest killjoy Carla will ever meet.

Carla ([24:24](#)):

I am the greatest fun sucker in the world.

Charmaine ([24:28](#)):

Let's pop that balloon.

Carla ([24:30](#)):

Yeah, well dang it. I do love it when I have them eating out of my hands. Thanks, Gregory the Great. Doesn't happen all that often, just FYI. But when it does, it feels good. So I mean that's a really interesting point. It's like it's not about you and maybe that's what we should repeat to ourselves every single time we get ready to preach. It's not about you. That's an excellent point. As much as I hate it.

Tony ([24:59](#)):

So maybe the next place to go then is the word and the sacraments to reflect on that. So we've reflected on proclamation and so now go on to these, these tangible physical rights, these visible signs of an invisible grace that we call the sacraments. Yeah. Yeah.

Charmaine ([25:18](#)):

And I, one of the things I like about how Migliore kind of sets this out as he, he acknowledges that there's, within Christianity as a whole, there's a couple of different ways in which the sacraments are seen. And sometimes both are present in the same tradition or denomination. But, uh, it kind of helps to

see this, the tension of our understanding of what sacraments are. The first is the idea that the act itself of a sacrament is what gives itself salvific power. Um, so there it's kind of like the, the function of the sacrament, um, by doing it the right way, uh, doing it the prescribed way God will act in some predictable guaranteed kind of way. So it's the idea that the, the form of the sacrament or the doing of the sacrament is what has efficacy is what matters.

Charmaine ([26:30](#)):

But the other side of it is the idea that the sacrament is something that points to a reality so that the, the sacrament itself is not the reality that makes God's action possible, but that it points to what God is already doing. That it's something that we are invited into. And so, so there's that tension between, is it the actual mechanics of the sacrament that make it powerful or useful or is it the, what we attribute to it? Is it the, the symbolism? Is it the meaning that, um, or the openness to the spirit that makes it useful or powerful?

Tony ([27:27](#)):

Yeah. These are like if you take the first one Charmaine described, that's the objective side. And the second one is the subjective side, the, the receptivity of the person participating in the sacrament. And it's like there's this tension between these two sides in Christian sacramental, theology, objectivity, the external right, the importance of the external, right as a communicator of grace. But, uh, the subjectivity, the importance of faith and openness and receptivity on the part of the communicant if you want to use that word. So there's that, there's that tension and Migliorie tries to, tries to hold, hold both sides of the tension together by, I think the way he puts it is that on the one hand, we don't want to see sacraments as magic rights. On the other hand, we don't want to make the sacraments so dependent on our moods and feelings that somehow Christ isn't, isn't present unless we feel that Christ is present.

Tony ([28:25](#)):

We don't want to go there either. Christ is truly, really present in the celebration of the sacraments, um, and yet not in a kind of a mechanical, magical way. So that's the line he's trying to walk. And that's very much, you know, Community of Christ, theology of sacraments is very much in alignment with that. Does that, yeah. So does that make sense Carlos, those, those two sides?

Carla ([28:49](#)):

Oh, definitely. But in Community Christ, don't we have a doctrine and covenants scripture that says don't be overly concerned about the form of the sacrament.

Charmaine ([28:57](#)):

Yeah, that's a fairly recent section, right?

Tony ([29:01](#)):

162 I believe that is that. Yeah. Uh, it's the spirit that that communicates grace. And uh, if Migliori could read that section of our Doctrine and Covenants, I think he'd be very pleased with that language. It's the, the Holy Spirit is the actor in the, the sacrament, but that doesn't then give us the freedom to just in a cavalier way, dismiss the external forms. And nor does that make it the whole, the whole action of the sacrament. Totally dependent on, you know, how I'm feeling this morning. Um, so that's the, it's the spirit. The spirit is active in and the celebration of this right Christ is present in that, in the right because of the spirits action and,

Charmaine (29:50):

and the structure gives us some ways of recognizing, um, how it fits into our life in the church. Yeah.

Tony (29:59):

Yeah. So, so I mean, a cool thing about Community of Christ sacramental theology is that we have, we have eight, we have eight different rights. Migliore, coming from a reformed or the reform perspective is the perspective that goes back essentially to John Calvin, uh, uh, in the sixteenth and 16th century in Geneva. And a little bit before him in the first wave of the reformation to old records mainly. Um, kind of the, the Swiss reformation is the source of the reformed tradition.

Tony (30:35):

And, um, and so, uh, I'm just not sure where I was going with that, but anyway, I sidetracked myself there.

Charmaine (30:43):

It happens.

Tony (30:44):

It does.

Carla (30:44):

You were you are talking about how many sacraments we have and in the reformed tradition,

Tony (30:49):

Reform tradition and most Protestant traditions have two. Baptism and Eucharist. Community of Christ, we have eight baptism, Lord's Supper or Eucharist, confirmation, ordination. The blessing of infants, Evangelists blessing, Administration to the sick, and Marriage. Um, so yeah, so we, we have these, these extra ways in which we can celebrate the presence of Christ among us.

Charmaine (31:26):

Yeah. I, I love a little thing that Migliore says starts out with the idea of proclamation, so he's talking about word of God is an indispensable means of grace, but it does not exhaust the many different ways and the extravagant love of God and the many ways that the extravagant love of God is communicated to us. And, um, talks about sacraments as visible words and active testimonies of the love of God in Christ. I just, I think that's really helpful to remember that the sacraments are our continued, you know, continuation of the unaccessible love of God trying to be made visible in our midst. So I think those are our kind of other words that we might not use so much in our own tradition, but that, um, kind of put it all in, put sacraments into perspective.

Tony (32:30):

And I love that image of the sacraments of being a means of grace. Their sacraments do not exist to make us feel guilty. They do not exist to condemn us. They do not exist to make us feel worthy. They do not exist to exalt some over others. They do not exist to somehow magically give us stuff that we otherwise wouldn't get. Um, they, they are a means, um, to use to use an old Calvinist term. Uh, they are one of the ways by which the word of God condescends to be with us in very, very tangible way. We,

we kind of get water and bread and juice or wine or hands. We, we get those things. They're part of our everyday life. And so, uh, the word who became flesh, uh, wants to, wants to still enflesh itself in our everyday lives. And, and we need, we need these physical symbols. And then these physical symbols that are specific rights can remind us again and again of how much all of life is Sacramento. That all of life can become a kind of a window, um, into which we have some glimpse of the love and grace and mercy of God. So that's, I think that's Community of Christ sacramental theology in a nutshell. It's designed to call us to live sacramentally as well

Charmaine ([33:58](#)):

Yeah, I think there's again, some idea, an idea, familiarity that fits our denomination quite well. And that is the idea that the sacraments are not things that are done to us, but they are things, they are avenues. They are places where we do something in response to God's grace. Already at work, we repent, we are baptized. Um, we submit our lives to the Holy spirit. Um, we choose to respond in service. And anyhow, so it's, I think it's a it's an a good way of looking at the sacraments that these aren't just rights of the church that are done to us so that we feel like we belong to the church, but they are first and foremost things we do to enter into life with God through Christ. So anyhow, I think that works well for us.

Carla ([35:04](#)):

I do too. I, you know, and going along with that Charmaine, you know, some of I think the best ministry, I know that's what we're going to talk about next, but some of the best ministry happens during the sacraments. And I would guess it's because we get to participate in that. Like when we hear a sermon, we are participating, but really we're passive participators like we sit and listen. But during the sacraments we might be the ones, uh, we get to take the bread and drink the juice or we, we might be the one being blessed or we might have our baby being blessed. So we actually get to be participants with Christ in that, in that sacrament. So.

New Speaker ([35:04](#)):

Charmaine ([35:48](#)):

Exactly. And those kinds of settings almost require us to do the interpretation within ourselves, whether it's in our feelings or in our mind, um, as we choose to go into them where we're conscious of, of what that, what we're doing and therefore we have to make meaning of it by using, um, by tying the words together with our actions. So, yeah, it's a, it's a place where we can take, take it all in more deeply.

Tony ([36:18](#)):

Hmm. And then, and then the hope of course, is that in that, out of that encounter where Christ extends himself to us in say, The Lord's Supper or in the baptismal service or whatever, um, the, the, the encounter with, with the living word then empowers us to take the goodness, the mercy, the love, the justice we've experienced there out into the world. So that sacramental theology continues to remain not just about us. It's about Christ. It's about the community. It's about the community's empowerment by the spirit to be a prophetic voice in the world. And so, um, there's this outreaching side of it. That is very, very important. It, it, none of this will keep reiterating. It's not about us. It's not about us. It's not about us. And yet it's very much about the transformation of us at the same time.

Charmaine ([37:23](#)):

Right. And I, I don't know, but I think this is probably a good spot to make the observation that the sacraments are the sacraments and spiritual formation and spiritual practices really are great companions to each other. When in spiritual formation we are practicing being open to God, to, listening, to being still to hear below the surface. God's work around us and within us it, when we bring that kind of awareness and openness to, to communion to the Lord's Supper to a time of praying for others who are ill or hurting or suffering. We're letting the sacraments have more profound impact. We're letting them be in more intentional ways, God with us. The spirit moving through us, um, Christ's offering coming into us. God's love accepting us. So, you know, whether it's a spiritual practice of centering prayer or meditation or, um, of scripture study or Lexio Divina, all of these things are attuning us, um, to God's presence in ways that then the sacraments enhance or the other way around the, the practices, the spiritual formation enhances our ability to, I don't want to say get more out of the sacraments but, but um, be more present with God in the sacraments. To recognize what, what they mean, but also that they are meeting places between us and God. And so I think the, those two elements of our life and God's sacraments and, and our spirituality, our intentional spirituality, um, enhance each other greatly.

Tony ([39:50](#)):

Yeah, very much. I, I think that the, I mean, both, both proclamation and the sacraments, it can be seen as ways that, that the divine word, the living word is constantly working among us to re-form us so that, that great tag from the reformation, Semper ref Armada always being reformed. That's, that's really our life we have, we are always in need of reformation.

Charmaine ([40:17](#)):

And so it's more than just reorganizing, not reorganized. Not always been reorganized, but it is about reforming,

Tony ([40:26](#)):

Always being re formed, uh, through, through the love of God that comes to us by these means of grace. And so then the next place we should go then is the third one to two ministry, Carla. Um, where we talked about earlier that ministry is the word extended extended through, uh, human action on behalf of others.

Carla ([40:49](#)):

And this one to me is the one that's not as formed as the others. Cause ministry happens in so many different ways. So I'm really interested to hear what you have to say about it.

Tony ([40:53](#)):

What maybe a good place to start as that with Migliore, who, who makes the distinction between first ministry in a general sense, which is really important is the whole church is called to ministry. Ministry is not first the province of a special elite cast. C a S T E ministry is the work of the whole church. And so that's where Migliore already starts. The $\mu\eta\tau\epsilon\rho\sigma\iota\alpha$ the Greek word service, service to God service to each other, service to the community that the whole church is called to that. Um, baptism and confirmation immediately call you to the ministry of all members as we refer to it in, in Community of Christ. Then Migliore says. Now there's also a more particular sense of ministry, which is ordained ministry.

Tony ([42:00](#)):

Ordained ministry is that within the, within the whole body of ministers that the Christian community is, some are called and set apart to very specific tasks of leadership, a celebration of sacraments, proclamation of the word, teaching, teaching of the faith of the church and so on. So that refers them to ordained ministry. And this is really important. Migliore has a really important thing for us in community of Christ. He says ordination does not change the ontological status of the ordained person. And by that he means ordination does not, does not elevate you as a human being, uh, into some kind of, uh, you know, Ubermensch who, who's above everybody else.

Charmaine ([42:55](#)):

It doesn't guarantee your salvation above other people. Another way to say it.

Tony ([42:59](#)):

Yeah, it, it is a setting apart for service among the servants and for the servants and so on. Then Mueller, he says on the other hand, ministry ordained ministry is not just merely to a function. So ordain ministry is essential, but it is not somehow superior to the ministry of the whole church. So he's, he's walking a very important line. And, and in the history of community of Christ, we sometimes transgressed on either side of that line, uh, for, for decades and decades we referred to the priesthood as the Holy priesthood, as if somehow they had an ontological status above everybody else in the congregation. Ontological is the philosophical term for, um, in, in one's own being that somehow, somehow ordination had rendered, rendered you into a different kind of person way above the, the run of the mill person, everybody else was. And there's nothing in the New Testament that justifies that. That's, that's, it's just not helpful. And so that that was a constant temptation for decades and decades in the reorganization to see the priesthood as somehow this thing that, that somehow, uh, lifted an individual out of the, out of the run of the mill everyday stuff that although all the poor rest of the congregation was stuck in, no, that's, that's not good.

Charmaine ([44:35](#)):

I think that's one of the places where reading scripture, uh, thoroughly and in context, reminds us that even the earliest leaders in the church, whether they be apostles, whether they be leaders of house churches, as we might see in Philippians, um, you know, whether it's Peter who still has some issues with his, his anger and his impulsiveness and his concerns about how he'll look to other people or the leaders in Philippi who, who seem to be coralling with each other and causing some division in the congregation. There's no, in the New Testament, there's no pretense that somehow just because you are in a leadership role or ordained or, or named a certain kind of disciple that, um, that you can't still be called out, that you can't still acknowledge that, that you have much growing to do. So I think scripture is really helpful there because, uh, it's not about, you know, church leaders pretending they've got it. All right. There is the humility that comes with acknowledging our weakness too. So that's a good place to, to keep going back to.

Tony ([46:01](#)):

And that brings us back to our principle. It's not about us, right? You know, whether we're good or bad or right or wrong, or ministry once again is about Christ, the living word, making the divine presence real among us. And so, uh, it's certainly not meant to be a status symbol. Uh, some kind of elevator of me over others. Um, yeah. And another

Charmaine ([46:27](#)):

helpful way of looking at at ministry or the accepting of ministry roles, whether ordained or not, um, is to see it not as having arrived but as seeing it as enrolling in kindergarten again. And what we do when we accept, um, a call to ministry again, whether ordained or not, is that we're putting ourselves in a new new spot and trying to learn a new what it means to represent Christ here, how, what it means to proclaim Christ from this new spot. Um, what it means to be self aware of, um, our own stuff, our weaknesses and our strengths and the places where we need healing. So, um, yeah, it's how we look at, at ministry I think is affects, it's, it's usefulness to the church.

Tony ([47:25](#)):

So that, you know, on the other side of this familiar, he says that ordain ministry is, is not just a mere function that the church can do without, um, there's different ways ordained ministries construed in different churches, but it's really essential and helpful to the, to the, to the overall functioning and health of the body. And so it shouldn't be taken lightly. There it, it, uh, that's, that's why in Community of Christ, we've, we've tried to stress the importance of, of priesthood education and like, you know, whole life education, continuing education so that, so that those who are called into those roles are always trying to develop their gifts and abilities so that they can, so that they can serve the servants of God better. And that's, that's, uh, what ordain ministry exists to do. So anyway, so some helpful stuff there from Migliore and I think it fits the Community of Christ context really well. And, uh, I think one last thing Migliorie talks about that I find very encouraging in terms of ordain ministry. He actually quotes the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner in this chapter got, I think Rahner said something like, uh, God has no horror of human beings. That mean meaning God is not surprised at at house. How much struggle, how messed up, how self centered, Yeah. The, the ordained minister, or in Rahner sense, the priest is not perfect, is not always if at all the, the exemplary human being. Um, and yet in, in ordain ministry, we offer ourselves to be, to be used by God, who's very gracious, who's always wanting to re form us because we always need reforming. Uh, so that, that gives me hope. I, I have, I have plenty of days when I think should I be doing any of this? You have those days, Carla?

Carla ([49:30](#)):

Absolutely. And you know, you've made me think, I have a, my daughter's almost 21 months old and I have very little horror when it comes to her cause I mean, it's kind of like we're the toddlers with God. You know, like I know if I'm going to give her food, it's going to end up in her hair or on the floor or, and I know I'm going to have to clean it up later. Uh, so I have very little horror when it comes to her. So it just makes me think of us. We're probably just toddlers to God in a lot of ways.

Charmaine ([50:01](#)):

And the reality there is then that since God knows that about us, um, God has created all of these paths that lead us back to, um, to God, to, to knowing who we are in God and who others are. Yeah, it's, this is a God who can see, see us and see through us and see into us. And there still seems to be love as the response to all of those.

Tony ([50:33](#)):

Hmm. One of the, one of the fourth century st Gregory's, I forget which one, it was either Gregory of Nazianzus or, or, um, um, the other Gregory, I can't remember it, just can't remember his surname. One of those, one of those Gregory's. And Gregory of Nisa. There it is, it finally came out in my head. One of those two Gregory's referred to the Christian life as a voyage into infinity is that there's, there's no end

to the voyage. There's, there's no end to the transformation under which we will go. And I think that's really a very encouraging and helpful to me. I don't have to get it right the first time. Many years ago, uh, I did some theological presentations to, uh, an ecumenical ecumenical leaders of Iowa group and I was in this group and there's these Catholic bishops and Lutheran bishops, Presbyterian ministers of, it's a pretty, you know, highbrow group except for me.

Tony ([51:39](#)):

I kind of lowered the bar there, I think, but I remember in the conversation, uh, one of the older Catholic bishops, just, just being quite honest and open about this, he said, he said, if the stage in my life, he must've been in his sixties, early seventies, said, at this stage of my life, there's so many things I know now. I wish I had known when I started out. And it's like, gosh, that was really liberating for me. It's like, Oh my, there's, I don't need to know it all right now I'm not, I can't possibly know it all. And, and there's so much room for, for growth in newness, and that's, that's really important to apply to ministry generally in the church, but also ordained ministry. There is no point at which we have got it all mastered.

Carla ([52:26](#)):

Ever, like ever, ever, ever. So that, that is very helpful for me to hear too, that I can't do anything that's going to shock God and that I don't have to be perfect right now. In fact, I never, ever, ever have to be perfect.

Charmaine ([52:41](#)):

That's right. And that's, you know, the other part of the idea of God being ever creative, um, that God takes the, the, the cracked and, and, um, misformed offerings that, that we make an offer and you know, kind of like little kids projects from school that they proudly give to their parents and um, and God uses them in ways we couldn't have imagined, um, that, that still creating God who, who uses our, um, our small offerings in ways that, uh, that are useful to the bigger picture.

Tony ([53:24](#)):

Sure. You know Carla, uh, there may have been a time or two when you said things that shock certain professors of yours, but I doubt that.

Carla ([53:26](#)):

I highly doubt that.

Tony ([53:32](#)):

But God, God was like, yeah, whatever.

Carla ([53:36](#)):

That's Carla. Exactly. Uh, as a math major, I am, I've always been very high brow Tony and Charmaine as you, as you remember, so that, that would never, ever, ever happen.

Charmaine ([53:54](#)):

Whatever.

Carla ([53:55](#)):

Thank you so thank you so much for this conversation about proclamation, sacrament and ministry. Um, uh, is there something that you wanted to talk about that we didn't get a chance to talk about yet?

Tony ([54:07](#)):

Mm, Mmm. Re rejoice. God. God is constantly reaching out to us. God's word is constantly trying to encounter us and transform us, um, through every possible means, but especially in the church through the means of, of the spoken word, through the means of the visible words of the sacrament, sacraments and through the ministry to which all of us are called. Um, there's, it's, that's, it's pretty cool. New is actually when you think about it.

Charmaine ([54:43](#)):

Yeah. And I think the only other thing I would want to say it, and I think we've touched on it, but, um, that is that ministry in whatever ways it's been conceived of, of, in, within Christianity was never intended to stay inside the church.

Carla ([55:04](#)):

Absolutely. You know, I will tell you what I got from this podcast is it, if you haven't found the good news, then you got to keep digging because it's there, you know?

Charmaine ([55:14](#)):

Yup. And it's, it's built into many of the structures that we find in the church. But we may be so used to the furniture that we've, we've, uh, kind of lost our wonder at, at what's there and how it's been crafted and the ways that it, it helps connect us to God.

Carla ([55:37](#)):

Beautiful. Well, thank you so much. You too. Again for talking about um, proclamation, sacrament and ministry. That's, so that was chapter 12, and Migliore's book, I believe we only have two more podcasts left left in the God shot series of percolating on faith. Do you want to tell us what we're going to be talking about next time? Yeah, next time.

Tony ([55:57](#)):

Work with Migliore's, a chapter on it's, it's, he titles it, the finality of Jesus Christ and religious pluralism. How, how do we as Christians relate within a pluralistic religious environment? What is the relationship between, we'll say Christianity and world religions? That's the next time.

Charmaine ([56:13](#)):

And part of the title is pointing to the idea of how can Christians hang on securely and an honor, their own belief in who Christ is, while at the same time recognizing where God may be at work in the rest of the world, in other religions, in other, in other ways. So it's, it's kind of a fun, fun encounter. Yeah.

Carla ([56:38](#)):

Oh yeah. That'll be really interesting. I'm excited about that one about, you know, uh, talking about, I love the idea of where Christianity fits in to, uh, with Islam and with Hinduism and with Taoism and so on and so forth. I'm excited about that. Thanks for that. Cool.

Tony ([56:54](#)):

And then, and then the final podcast and the series will be on well, eschatology last thing, uh, and we'll use Migliorie's great chapter at the end of this book on Christian hope, uh, for that, for that final podcast in the series.

Carla ([57:09](#)):

Oh, wonderful. Well, thank you so much. You too, for sharing with us and for helping us understand a little bit more about what we do and why we do it, especially me. And, uh, we look forward to talk to you again.

Charmaine ([57:24](#)):

Thank you Carla, for keeping us on track and, and keeping tying it back to, to congregational ministry and, and the inner journey that we all are on.

Josh ([57:34](#)):

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Speaker 1 ([58:24](#)):

[inaudible].