

few years back, I was sitting in a café visiting with a family in a remote part of the country. We were talking about family, the church, new initiatives and opportunities in that part of the world. Then, at one point during a natural pause in the conversation, the father leaned forward and interlocked his fingers resting his hands on the table. He looked me straight in the eye with purpose and asked, "Do you know what differentiates us from every other church in the world?" I'm sure I stared back awkwardly dumbfounded, but when I think back, I am grateful I was smart enough to keep my mouth shut. After a moment of intense silence, he added "Continuing Revelation. That's what differentiates the Community of Christ from every other church there is. The way we understand and incorporate God's guidance into our everyday experiences across the globe is critical to this community of disciples."

I think he is right. As a result of that conversation, it has encouraged me to observe how revelation plays a significant part of who we are.

A phrase I have often heard of late from some explorers and seekers is: "I like to think I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious." The sentiment is that they believe in a Divine power of sorts, but are not interested in some of the dogma, the rhetoric, the oppressive nature, the repetitiveness, the in-authenticity, or the drama contained within many current religious bodies. However, the concern of not engaging with others to flesh out connection with the Divine, simply experiencing the spiritual on one's own without the balance of the community, is that there are no checks or balances in place to help with the interpretation. There is no support network to be able to help guide and nurture someone through those reflections.

I believe this is exemplified when a new revelation is brought to the church from the Prophet/President of the church. Even before it is presented, the way in which the revelation is formed is not in a single moment from a simple dictation from the Divine spirit, but it is through many moments in prayer and discernment. The words are shared and shifted with counsellors and colleagues even before its presented to the whole church body. And even then, once received by the entire church, considerable time is then spent as a whole reflecting and discerning for themselves as to whether these words are indeed the will of God. It happens together, in a multicultural, multilingual body of disciples. And crucially, that body helps one another to understand the mystery of God's guidance and yearning for our lives and seeing how and where we can make a difference in the lives of others and this world. We are a prophetic people, spiritual within a religious body.