

# Scott Murphy

## Trust: Essential for Community

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Since World Conference, I've had the wonderful opportunity to hear stories from Community of Christ members and friends that caused me to reflect on "community," which is foundational to our call as a faith movement in the world.

I'm grateful for stories that express deep gratitude for the gift of community that many experience in the church, the kind of community that creates a sense of belonging and value in a person's life. True community can be life-changing.

But with the stories of gratitude, I have heard stories from those who struggle as they question whether they belong in the church anymore.

In these stories of deep question, the most common reason offered is the fear of rejection if expressing a different perspective than a majority of the congregation or group on important social issues.

My heart breaks when I hear and feel this kind of disappointment and loss because these people feel they cannot be authentic and remain a valued part of the conversation on life issues important for the church to explore.

As I ponder why some feel that connection of community while others feel its absence, I wonder if our sense of community has been conditioned by societal behaviors that community is formed more by our aligned agreements than our sense of trust that grows from the gift of Christ-like love and respect, even in our diversity.

It is easy to feel connected and a sense of belonging when you share a common perspective on specific issues. But the kind of community that forms from our diversity opens pathways that can be life-giving for all who yearn to belong. At least this is the kind of community I hear being called in Doctrine and Covenants 161:3a-c:

**Open your hearts and feel the yearnings of your brothers and sisters who are lonely, despised, fearful, neglected, unloved. Reach out in understanding, clasp their hands, and invite all to share in the blessings of community created in the name of the One who suffered on behalf of all.**

**Do not be fearful of one another. Respect each life journey, even in its brokenness and uncertainty, for each person has walked alone at times. Be ready to listen and slow to criticize, lest judgments be unrighteous and unredemptive.**

**Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this that each is called.**

While I cannot fully understand all the dynamics in the many cultures where the church is located, I do know there are places where diversity is not valued. Instead, siloed communities are formed in like-mindedness rather than in diversity, where trust is the product of feeling loved, respected, valued, and true belonging.

I share these reflections because I truly believe Community of Christ has a vital role and gift to offer in the world. In these words of counsel is our call we cannot forget.

**"Community of Christ," your name, given as a divine blessing, is your identity and calling. If you will discern and embrace its full meaning, you will not only discover your future, you will become a blessing to the whole creation. Do not be afraid to go where it beckons you to go.**

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:1a

Seeing the diversity of perspectives shared in the spirit of love and respect during 2023 World Conference, I witnessed growth in the church in what authentic community can feel and look like. And it was good!

May the call to be that living presence of sacred community in the world be alive in choices we make in our congregations, groups, or wherever we are with others. For when this happens, we will be a blessing alive in creation.



