

ES 63 | Common Grounds | Sacred Space | Prayer for Peace
Project Zion Podcast

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Karin Peter

Welcome to Common Grounds, part of Project Zion podcast where we discuss all things Liturgical Calendar The Liturgical Calendar takes us through the seasons and holy days of the Christian year, beginning with Advent in concluding with the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, which is Reign of Christ Sunday in Community of Christ. But many denominations know it as Christ the King Sunday. Today we're starting a short series on Common Grounds where we will discuss the small group resource sacred space that you can find on the World Church Website. On the worship helps page next to the worship outlines and sermon helps. Our guests for these discussions will be folks who have written pieces of the Sacred Space Lectionary Series Small Group Resource for the website. Sacred Space includes several elements of group interaction and worship, including the our topic for today, which is Prayer for Peace. We want to hear from our writer friends how, and perhaps if participating as a writer for the resource based on the Liturgical Calendar affected them outside of writing. In other words, have they become more conscious of the seasons and Holy Days? Has the journey through the Christian Calendar impacted their discipleship? So today we're visiting with Caleb and Tiffany Brian. Caleb and Tiffany live in St Paul, Minnesota, and participate as leaders in many areas of church life in the Headwaters Mission Center. In their work life, Caleb is a chemist, and Tiffany is an educator. So first, welcome to both of you. And thank you for sharing with us here at Project. Zion.

Caleb Brian

Karen, Thanks for having this.

Tiffany Brian

Thanks for having us.

Karin Peter

So is this your first time to be on Project Zion?

Caleb Brian

It is.

Karin Peter

Oh, okay. Well, hopefully it's not your last. It's a fun thing to do. So I'm glad you're with us. So I wanted to actually start with with you, Tiffany, because you have a Lutheran foundation of faith in your background is Lutheran. And so I'm guessing you would have been the more familiar of the two of you with the liturgical calendar. So what has your experience with it been? And how has it shaped you as a disciple?

Tiffany Brian

Well, I grew up, you're right, attending a Lutheran church in rural Wisconsin, And I was quite familiar with, like, the big seasons, like Advent. And I think Advent, especially because it was so visual during worship with the lighting of the candles. I also knew about Lent pretty well because my friends were Catholic. And that meant that we would have fish sticks every Friday for school lunch, which I did not appreciate, but also because my dad would take me to Wednesday night Lenten services at the small sister church. I remember vividly one year we built this little Lenten table. Uh, it had little pieces that we would add each week. So the first week we got a platform with the cross. Then the next week we got a kind of thorns the next week, a small sponge, and we just added each week. And I really like that because we would focus on the things that we were adding. And it kind of gave me an idea of what was actually about even as a kid. Another year we celebrated like, think it's called the Tenebrae Service on Monday, Thursday, So I knew a bit about that other of the less familiar, familiar holy days. I was familiar I was vaguely aware of because my mom was on the altar guild, which was this committee of mostly women, if not entirely women who would change the altar class depending on what color they needed to be for that. So even if I didn't know much about the holy day, I knew it was something was happening. So in general, while I was vaguely aware of the liturgical calendar, it hasn't been until we wrote these Prayers for Peace that I really researched. Each of them, especially the last familiar and even the ones that was more familiar with my understanding has really deepened.

Karin Peter

Okay, so thank you for sharing that. I love the idea about adding to the tableau for Lent, and we might have to borrow that for thoughts for Children during Lent for one of our cycles.

Tiffany Brian

I think my dad still has it.

Karin Peter

Oh really? Okay, maybe we could get a photo of that. That's awesome. So, Caleb, about you? How familiar were you with the Liturgical calendar?

Caleb Brian

Yeah. So I'm hoping my parents don't listen to this and, like, come back and swap me for my answer, but kind of thinking about growing up in Community a Christ. I don't think we've really been that well aware of the Liturgical calendar. At least you didn't talk about it the same way that we do now. And so as a kid, it was more, um, recognizing Easter and Christmas and kind of

taking those for granted. And I don't remember lenten practices much. Um, and so I think it was really when I got to Graceland that I started to recognize that there was this larger picture of how scriptures were laid out throughout the year, and the story of Christ's journey was laid out, and that's really took root in a preaching class that I took, um, because you picked the scriptures for certain pieces and you get a certain part of the story. And so then if you get a certain part of the story from the scripture now you overlay this Liturgical calendar with it and you get a deeper context for what the different seasons really mean, and you get to add more and more to that story. So, for example, Tiffany and I, for the last five or six years, maybe more than that, go to a holding evening prayer service during Advent, which really brings up the whole Liturgical piece of Christmas is not just the end of the month. It's kind of this whole journey leading up to that point. I think there's parts where I actually enjoy that entire journey up to Christmas Day more than Christmas Day, except for food with family,

Karin Peter

Which is always the bonus. Yeah, absolutely. So you said you took a preaching class when you were at, Graceland University. That helped kind of expose you to that. Whether other aspects of that that affected you or that caused you to look more closely at that, the whole cycle of Lectionary and Christian Calendar?

Caleb Brian

Well, taking classes with Tony and Charmaine certainly means that you dig a lot more into Scripture as well. Um, and then the preaching course was offered by Priscilla Eppinger. So getting that kind of outside Community of Christ perspective on the depth that can be associated with preaching. Um, certainly meant that I started looking at more details than just like what? What are the words in the Scripture text? It was more like, Okay, the scripture text is placed in this part of the year because of this.

Karin Peter

Okay, so further, our listeners, Priscilla Eppinger has been on the Project Zion Podcast before, But if you're not familiar with her, she's from the American Baptist Tradition. And she was a professor for many folks going through Graceland and also through seminary, I'm had Priscilla for a New Testament classes. So last year, I think it was last year when you were approached to write the Prayers for Peace for Holy Week and you agreed to do that. And we're very grateful that you did that. And the prayers are lovely. And this coming year, you've agreed to write Purse for Peace for several of the holy days and seasons of the calendar, including the transfiguration of Jesus, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, All Saints Day and Reign of Christ Sunday and then tagged onto the end of that. Hopefully some Advent Christmas and Epiphany prayers. Yeah, maybe next year. If we don't get those done this year. So let's let's tackle first. The Prayers for Peace tell us a little bit about what prayer for peace is in the life of Community of Christ and how you've seen prayer for peace kind of lived out in congregation you've attended.

Caleb Brian

Yeah, So the Prayer for Peace, as I understand it, is this powerful expression of the church's collective commitment to peace in the world. And so the fact that the World Church commits to practice Prayers for Peace every single day helps really bring that to life and literally, if you don't know about it, you can go to the World Church website and find prayers for peace services that the church calls us to daily at 1 p.m. Central time. And it's really cool that a lot of that has been happening more online lately as people are forced to explore new expressions of the church, and I think that increased availability is really great to keep us all connected. Um, now, in the congregations that we've been a part of, we've often had a special candle in the front of the church that's lit pretty early in the service, so that throughout the service, we can be reminded that were not only being called together for worship that day, but also to think about the need for peace in the world. Our current congregation, St Paul often lights it before or after really close to when we share joys and concerns. So not only are we lifting up the joys and concerns of the congregation, we can also think of the concern for peace around the world. And if a couple of years ago, the Headwaters Mission Center bought these unique candleholders from Harold House and gave them to every single congregation. So now, as we're worshipping in each of our individual locations, we can also think that in other parts of the mission center, that same piece, candles being lit,

Karin Peter

Another aspect, an expression of community.

Tiffany Brian

Yeah, and I think the Prayer for Peace is a really beautiful part of the worship service because it's such an inclusive part of the service. The content itself of a Prayer for Peace really draws our attention to people or places that are often for gotten or overlooked and its role in the church services inclusive because lighting the candle has been a part of the service where maybe people who don't really like to speak are able to participate in our congregation. We have a boy who is now in sixth grade, and he would only light the candle. He would never want to speak in front of the church. But that was his main contribution to the service, and I think it really helped him feel included. So there are some people who will volunteer only to read the Prayer for Peace and none of the other parts of the service. So I think it's really inclusive in that way. And I also think that the Prayer for Peace is in many ways, like a common denominator for our congregations. I mean, who can argue against peace? Uh, lives us that even a flawed humans that we can and do have this common hope. This common thing we're working for.

Karin Peter

Thank you. So when you were approached to participate in writing Prayers for Peace for the sacred space resource, why did you agree to do that? I mean, what does participating in that in this new way mean to you?

Caleb Brian

I think we agreed to it because we're constantly working on how do we incorporate spiritually practices into our lives? Tiffany has been really good at digging deeper into things like yoga and meditation. And if you see me in a sun salutation, it's no good. So kind of thinking about other spiritual practices that we could work on. And I would say the practice of writing kind of pulls me into that room. So this became a really good reflection and kind of a reminder that we need to be working for peace in the world and that words really matter and how we connect and create peace. And so it's been kind of impressive and engaging to see how people have really been drawn into the Prayer for Peace in different contexts. And it's really humbling to think that we're providing some of those writings this year.

Tiffany Brian

Writing is something that I really enjoy, and I find endless self discovery in my writing. So being asked to write the Prayers for Peace seem like a really good opportunity to ponder this part of the service that I tend to enjoy. But I hadn't really thought much about. Prayer itself is also something that I would say that I'm not very good at if you can be good at prayer. But I've been praying my whole life. And yet it's something that I want to grow more in, and I just I love words and language. And so when we're writing prayers often use hymns for inspiration, or I'll ponder different themes or phrases during my daily walks with our dog Ramona. We've also used a book that Caleb has, perhaps, from his Graceland days called *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* by Debra and Ron Rienstra, which has helped us think about things that we really hadn't considered when thinking about the words in ah, service or in prayer. I even wrote my educational master's thesis on words and the impact on student conversations. So writing a prayer seemed like a really good fit for me in many of the things that I enjoy doing some, I was really excited to think about the words to think about what words might resonate with people who are praying or the people who are listening to the prayer as well as what words can we use that might reveal an aspect of God that we hadn't thought about much before?

Karin Peter

So Dave Brock, who's the former presiding evangelist and a former apostle, would say that you are a lover of words. Yes, absolutely term that that he uses on would recognize that in himself as well as and others who feel this thing. So what kind of preparation did the two of you engage in as you prepared to write the Prayers for Peace for Holy Week so that they would be meaningful or reflect that part of the Christian calendar season?

Tiffany Brian

So to write the Holy Week Prayers for Peace, we had never written anything together before, so we kind of felt their way through it. We started with Caleb, but writing keywords and phrases from each scripture passage that would be focused on for each day of the Holy Week. We also added symbols around each day and considered the overall mood of the worship service that that prayer would be part of and we like to place that prayer in the context of the week. Then we would meditate on how Jesus felt during that scripture on the overall mood of the scripture itself, and all of that kind of informed how we crafted him for example, you have this really

exciting, exultant mood of Palm Sunday, and that's reflected in that prayer. And so then we also focused on how hopeful and exciting pursuing peace can be. Whereas the prayer for peace that we wrote for good Friday, it's much more subdued and we decided to focus on the aspects of pursuing peace, how it can sometimes feel exhausting and overwhelming open.

Caleb Brian

I think that we found that looking up in kind of dwelling on the Scripture passages like Tiffany mentioned really helped to draw us into the depth of Scripture to create a meaningful experience. I gave us the idea for words that could be impactful, the themes that could resonate within celebrations and how we ourselves could be drawn towards peace and try and create that as people are reading it. I think there's a lot of things that are gonna impact us and how we experience Holy Week this year. But I feel like it's kind of like preparing a good sermon that as you explore text, you get drawn into a deeper sense of what it means. And so I think that really happened here. There's really a vulnerability to opening ourselves to exploring what Holy Week means and opening that vulnerability in a way that allows us to kind of really dig into the whole Christian calendar and understand it even more.

Karin Peter

So something came to mind as you both were sharing and that is that writing prayers for public resource is very different, then even prayed in a congregation when you're asked to offer a prayer, or and certainly quite different than praying at home. How how did that feel?

Tiffany Brian

Sometimes it would be frustrating because I would like I mentioned, I find and I will think about it when I'm walking my dog, Ramona and something will really resonate with me. I think about writing Advent prayers and how it's so dark where we are during Advent in Minnesota, and by the time I'm walking Ramona, it's even dark, and I might want to include I might have ah thought for some imagery that would work perfectly. But then I realized, Wait a minute. It's not dark all around the world. In some places, this is summer. So it was a good challenge, I think, because it helped me think outside of my own experience, Um, and thinking about pursuing peace, my idea of what that looks like and what that will be like is also very different than people around the world.

Caleb Brian

I have to admit that for, like invocations and benedictions type prayers, I tend to be more off the cuff and so listen through the process of the service and maybe pull in some words from the service to incorporate our ideas, so the fact that we went through two or three edits of the prayers and were very intentional about some of the words and themes that we included. Uh, definitely take it to a whole other level.

Karin Peter

Yeah, that has been my experience in participating in writing pieces for Sacred Space and other church resource is as well. It takes you outside of yourself in a very real way.

Caleb Brian
For sure.

Karin Peter

So as you look forward to this year's prayers for Holy Days that you are working on, these are, for the most part less familiar to folks than Holy Week. The whole other than possibly a Maundy Thursday, holy weeks pre familiar to most Community of Christ people, some of these coming up our Trinity Sunday it we've only added in the Community of Christ calendar for a couple of years. Transfiguration Sunday, that kind of thing. So how will that affect your preparation when you look forward to writing purse for peace? Some of those lesser known days in the calendar.

Caleb Brian

Yeah, I think we're really good to get into context. So being that they are less familiar days like you just mentioned, that means we're gonna have to pull up more details out of the Scriptures to both understand. How can we write it to be meaningful for those days? And then how can we it in some sense, give a a bit of purpose for people who are listening to understand the relation to those days? So, for example, we've started on the transfiguration of Jesus. Uh, because it's due next week and it's the transfiguration. Is this really powerful mountaintop experience for the disciples? And it leaves them speechless. And so you could think about the same thing for working for peace, like seeing powerful ways that it can shape people's lives can also leave us speechless. So is there not some way that we can incorporate the two together? So as we pray for peace. We find ourselves on the mountaintop breathless and overwhelmed and yet energized to go and do more.

Karin Peter

I look forward to reading that.

Tiffany Brian

Yeah, I I must say, Caleb, for being a chemist, he really has a way with words, especially in writing. When the first time I realized it was when we were writing our thank you notes for our wedding and I would just write a pretty standard issue because I knew we had a lot to do and he had things personalized to people. And I've been really impressed with that. Um, so for me, when we start to think about writing the second, the newest round of Prayers for Peace for these Holy Days it was really exciting to write about them because I had not really, I had heard of these Holy Days before, but I hadn't really thought about the much. So some hearts might be familiar, like the imagery of Fire and Wind or on Pentecost. Ah, I worked at a Lutheran Summer Camp all through college, and we sing a song with the lyrics three and one, referring to the Trinity's. I was pretty steeply immersed in that Ah, but what I love about writing and about faith is that I'm always finding a new perspective on familiar things. So writing about unfamiliar or even semi familiar holy days was an exciting challenge. I think I mentioned earlier that I often used hymns as inspiration, and I was reading hymns in the Trinity section of Community of Christ Sings to learn more for the prayer for Trinity Sunday when I had an ah ha moment is what I call it with my students. I was reading the him It was him Number 60 Creator

God Creating Still, and the writer Jane Parker Huber began verse one with Creator God Creating Still. Verse two began with Redeemer, God Redeeming Still and Verse three began with Sustainer God Sustaining Still. And I thought that was just so beautiful. These verbs that became adjectives describing God. And it emphasized the doing of God that I'm size. God has this living doing being, and that really resonated with me in that moment, and I was wondering if there would be any way we could use that in our prayer for peace. To help remind people that God is not sitting and by a stream somewhere, chilling out. God is moving in for peace and calls us to move to. But of course, as an English teacher, I'm wondering about copyright and you know all these things. And then later that night, I was reading the book noticing God by Richard Peace and Hebrew Reference the naming of the Trinity as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. And he said it was a common thing in Christianity and I blew my mind and like, How have I missed this? I'm sure I've heard it before, but it didn't really stay with me. So now I'm thinking about God is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and what that means to me all because I was writing in a prayer for peace and that really, I'm just really grateful for the opportunity because it's taking my faith in new directions.

Karin Peter

Thank you for sharing that ah ha moment with us. So I just want to switch gears just a little bit. From the experience of writing to maybe how our listeners might experience these prayers for peace as they read them. So with Sacred Space, it's a resource that's on the website. It's written to be a digital resource and people can download it. You can search for it on your on the app Community, Christ app on your phone and and downloaded that way as well. And they're meant to be really user friendly. But sometimes we I mean, I think people realize they can use it for small groups and small congregations. But it could also be used for families or the pieces of each Sacred Space weekly outline can be used in different ways. So how might our listeners experience using the Prayer for Peace in their daily life?

Caleb Brian

Yeah, it's really interesting that with the advances of social media like you just mentioned how easy it can be to find on I enjoy, like following the church on Instagram cause every day it's has, you know, like the countries that were praying for peace for um, I think the prayers for peace can almost become like an add on to the mission prayer so if you're diligent at flossing and then reading the mission prayer while you're flossing in the morning, uh,

Karin Peter

I take it it's taped to your mirror.

Caleb Brian

It is. Perhaps you could take in the prayer for peace, and that's not something we've done, but maybe something will start to do, um, to really set yourself off on the right foot for the day. And I also think that, um to really experience it, it can also take a conscious effort of not only reflecting on it by acting so as you're hearing the word you're kind of reflecting. But many of the prayers for peace call us to some sense of action, at least in my opinion. And so there will be some who are inspired for kind of the internal reflection and some who are inspired for that

external reflection. And I would just encourage people that to find the way that works for you, to find the way that that really helps you feel the call to act for peace and dig into that.

Tiffany Brian

Caleb's mom, Wendy told me once that she said an alarm on her phone for one o'clock each day, and she wasn't always available at that time, but sometimes she was, and she would take that moment to pray with people around the world for peace. And it really helped connect her to this ah, larger community. Um, and even if she didn't make that exact time, it was still a reminder that pursuing peace is a daily practice. I'm really leaning into that word right now practice. We need to practice pursuing peace over and over through a little acts. And I think the daily prayer for peace is a really good reminder of that.

Karin Peter

That's a good idea that becomes a spiritual practice and with all our technology, said our alarms. So we're coming to the close of our conversation, and I just wanted to give you the opportunity for any last comments or thoughts that you might have that you'd like to share with our listeners.

Tiffany Brian

Yeah, Caleb and I were talking about one thing that we really ponder with the prayers is the salutation at the beginning of the prayer and in most of my extemporaneous or off the cuff prayers. I usually start with Dear God, but I'm really intrigued by the way that people address God and I had a friend who always began his prayers with Great Spirit, which really fascinated me. And one year for lunch, I decided to address God as mother instead of the more ubiquitous father, and it really opened my eyes to characteristics of God that I may be new were there, but I had overlooked. And recently in our small group we talked about names for God, and I'm finding that I'm really drawn to names that emphasize God as a doer so singer of the first song or igniter of the first flame, that kind of thing.

Caleb Brian

I think I would add that we'd like to encourage listeners to find some time to make that list of names for God that they know and perhaps look up other names for God the other people would recommend or find a couple that speak to them and maybe even come up with a few like the singer of the first song and igniter of the first plane, and then challenge, uh, people to use those names for God and see how it opens their eyes and their hearts to new perspectives of who God is and how God is calling us to pursue peace. Uh, if you feel so lead to replace the beginnings of the prayers that we wrote with something that you feel fits you in that moment, then that's okay, too. And we hope and pray that really that what we've prepared is ah, going to be a meaningful experience and open all of our eyes to feel the spirit moving as we seek peace both individually and as a church.

Karin Peter

Those are wonderful ideas and recommendations. I appreciate the idea about the names for God if people are looking for ideas. For that you mentioned, the hymnal is a wonderful place to

find additional names for God and also on the World Church website In the Google Search Bar, you can put in inclusive language policy, and at the end of that, there's the local pages of names for God that I think come out of Scripture that I think worth and would had put together many years ago as kind of a starting point for that. A swell well, I want to thank you both Tiffany and Caleb Brian, for kicking off our Common Grounds mini series, if you will, on Sacred Space, the small group resource. And we look forward to sharing in your Prayers for Peace going forward. So I'd like to close if we could, with one of the prayers of the Brians wrote for Good Friday. It seems especially relevant given that we are recording right now during our global struggle with the Covid 19 virus and all that that has brought to us. And so, um, if you wouldn't mind sharing that prayer with us, we'd appreciate it.

Caleb Brian

Beaten and broken God, across the world pain and oppression, like what you experienced on the first Good Friday still exist. It is because of this that we continue to pray for peace. Peace that releases people from unbearable hurt, peace that feeds the hungry, peace that empowers the overwhelmed, and peace that heals the sick. May our peace be delivered to those places as an ember of faith. A small but hopeful beacon of light that shines in the darkness. Tear back the curtains so that all may see peace a new. Amen

Karin Peter

Amen Thank you again for sharing with us. This has been a Common Grounds for Project Zion. I'm Karin Peter. Our guests have been Caleb and Tiffany Brian. Thanks so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson

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