

267 | Art and Spirituality | Ann Bonnefin
Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson

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

Karin Peter

Welcome to Project Zion. I'm your host today, Karin Peter and with me today is Anne Bonnefin from Sydney, Australia, and has a degree in fine arts. A master's in communication with an emphasis on design and she serves on the editorial team. And as the design lead for the Australia Herald the Australian Herald, for those who are unfamiliar is an international magazine of Community of Christ. So we're just so grateful she's here. Welcome, Anne.

Anne Bonnefin

Oh, thank you, Karin. Lovely to be with you.

Karin Peter

So let's just take a minute and you can share a little bit of your background. So what should our Project Zion listeners know about you?

Anne Bonnefin

Oh, gosh, art is a big part of my life is always saying something that I just received a lot of joy from. I lost my husband two years ago, and that's, um, you know, going through the grieving process has taught me a lot about life and appreciation being in the now and just the the sanctity of life. I guess I'm I have three lovely children and all grandchildren and one more on the way. Yeah.

Karin Peter

Marvelous! Well, you mentioned that you love art and that that has been a big part of your life and and what sustains you, and you and I were able to have some conversations last year about art and spirituality which led us to do this episode. So I'm very excited about it and kind of wanna jump right in. So my first question that I really would like you to articulate a response for our listeners would be why? Art and spirituality and especially, like, why now why are people looking at this now are connecting these things and I guess the way the vernacular would be Is this a thing? Is art in spirituality? Is this the new thing? But what is the link?

Anne Bonnefin

Well, yes, I I am. I think art is like the new wine skin, I think in terms of spirituality yet and way seem to have gone back to some of those old practices off. You know, the importance of ritual and the importance off the visual in in expressing and finding expression of symbols and metaphors. So I think and and also kind of discovering the spiritually in the every day. So art has a way of exploring those those things and helps us journey along that process of discovering

different truths that that are within us. So I think I think, you know, there is a bit more of a movement to to sort of allow people to discover their own, you know, wisdom rather than having somebody come and tell them what they should be believing in that It's about, you know, as a community, discovering that in a system that we all have within us. That connects with spirituality. They're sort of intertwining that way.

Karin Peter

So you have been engaged in a program of study around this topic of art and spirituality. Can you talk a little bit or describe that program to us?

Anne Bonnefin

Yeah, it's It's a little different than, um, other out therapy programs. It's called transpersonal art therapy and counseling, and I've been doing that for studying that for two years, so I'll finish in May. And then I have to do some placements which which I may do online and the word transpersonal is the word that that's many people understand, but it means sort of anything outside of their egos. Um, so it involves the connection to spirit involves the connection to your mind, body, um, type practices. But it's really very much about self awareness than deeply discovering deep listening in your own life, listening to your own life and discovering your own in a system. Um, so you know, we use our cognitive brain a lot to try and that sense of life, but we forget to engage those other parts of us you know, the spirit and the body and uneven our environment. And sometimes it's difficult to solve a problem using the same pattern of thinking that created the problem. And so, using our as way of engaging our imagination and bringing in metaphor and symbolic meaning, we can create something different for herself. So a transpersonal at therapist uses those things the use of imagination and music and symbols. They're they're really powerful tools to help us to connect to our own spirituality, you know, think about music, you know, think about how it touches our soul beyond the word You know how we can connect to God's room through music and how our spirits connect with God and and the Divine in that process. That's what the as a transpersonal art therapist, we try to use those things, too, to enlist a deeper response to life, I guess. So, I think what's very interested when I found out that I'm scientists say we we use symbols to think so that's why it's often difficult to express what we really want to say, because their mind is thinking in symbols all the time and words are sometimes a very poor way of off expressing what's what's really going on in, you know, in our brains. And, uh, Young believes that ask symbolic pictorial way of knowing comes before rational thought. So using our imagination to make sense of ourselves, of our spirit and connection to spirit is a really powerful way off and a powerful path to spirit. So the idea using story telling or drawing or movement or poetry or meditation or color and symbol helps us access to access deeper ways of, deeper ways of understanding, waiting and creating main.

Karin Peter

And perhaps from what you said about what Carl Young said, a more original way of understanding meaning.

Anne Bonnefin

Yes, yes, yes,

Karin Peter

So I as your as your sharing some of this I'm trying to make some connection for people. So I grew up at a time and in the church where the only real art involved with the spiritual or the religious expression of the people would have been the worship center at church. Or maybe a picture of Jesus when you walked in. But you can, what I'm hearing you say, is if you take those principles of why there was a worship centre symbol color, um, meaning to connect us in. And many of us have experienced that through through color. You're extrapolating on that and saying, you can use those same principles then in your spiritually formation

Anne Bonnefin

Yes. You can create your own personal, say, sacred space. It doesn't just mean lighting a candle. It could mean having a going and picking some flowers around you or, um, just taking time. And they intentional about my you know, the Japanese, I I recently went to Japan and somebody said to me, You know, the Japanese, to the Japanese, live is art and art is life, and that had a profound impact on myself just in the last few months of being intention of it that then I've created a little space. Well, it's like a welcoming table at the front of my house, which reminds me to be present and intentional in my day and every week I just changed it a little bit. You know I might have some plows there or might have a little book with some artwork in it. Um, might have a little meditation bell, just just a piece of nature. It's really interesting to find that in your own life, you know, to find that meeting in your own life, not not just those things become symbols become ways to connect to the spirit in the every day. And I think, I think that's how expression of faith is changing. We really recognize it's a faith journey. It's connecting our worship is our life. You know, I think that's where perhaps religions air reawakening that idea that your life is your worship and connecting to that using symbol a metaphor is very powerful. Um, way to to Jenny.

Karin Peter

So when you talk about these connecting points, you've mentioned several times symbol and metaphor. So before the person who this is the first time they're really listening to anything about art and spirituality, about how they're intertwined, what might be some connecting points for them to kind of think about between art and spirituality. So if you're new to the whole idea of this.

Anne Bonnefin

Well, it's about connecting to, um, our spirits experiencing creation. So that's about bringing awareness to the spirit and the flow of that in our life. So art is a way that connects us to spirit in that, um, you know, I mean, I think of spirit as the relationship between things. You know, that kind of a glue that holds everything together and in that way art nearly tries to bring it. Bring that to form is in, um, that we can hold for a while. So, for instance, it's like our hands trying to hold water. It's It's an in perfect vessel, and art isn't a the perfect vessel, but we can hold that for a while before, before, um, you know, water can't be contained, you know, and,

um and words could never describe God or art can never really describe the Divine. So art is an in perfect vessel, but it's it sort of becomes a tool to help us take us deeper and points to something. So art is really only a way of pointing to something. I don't know if that's too,

Karin Peter

I appreciate that that art is a tool to do that. So So when we talk about in the Christian tradition, there are spiritual practices, which are tools that helped people connect to the divine as they understand it to end. There are ones that have been established in practice for centuries. And then there's a school of thought that that we can explore and adapt and define and create spiritual practices on our own. As we go forward. So are there. Is it the same for art and spirituality? Are there established set practices that one can do to engage in art and and as a spiritual practice? Or is it pretty much an individual thing where each person determines that on their own?

Anne Bonnefin

It's both, really, um, so, you know, think, think back to something that that you love doing that's creative. Could be dancing or gardening or cooking or writing, you know, It's going to be a different thing for every person. When we work is art therapists, we will use use things that are available to us like crayons or collage or painting. Or we might have been used dance. We might use meditation to bring it in the space, but within that there could be different reactions. Different media can create a different reaction in different people. People have different emotional responses, so so somebody may have a really negative response to drawing. And as an art therapist we would start with that. What you said about, you know, we would explore that wouldn't follow that and and follow that to to ask spirits to have a sense of, um, you know, we were maybe journal about that, and and within that becomes a sense of kind of maybe bringing, bringing something to life so it can heal. So art about creating visual so that you could bring it tonight so you can dine off with it. So sometimes, you know, it's not there is that we might be dealing with somebody who may have, um, you know, some sort of issue. And they may need to process something, and and if we can put it down on paper, weaken dialogue with it and it becomes something separate from us. Um, and sometimes using crayon to express something can be a surprising thing can happen in the process.

Karin Peter

So I remember facilitating last long ago with a group of people I didn't know very well. And there were some senior people there, and one was a farmer, been former all this life on senior citizen. And I remember having a bunch of markers and crayons and those kinds of things. And I asked the question if you were going to draw how how open and welcoming your congregation is, What would it look like? And this this man that in my mind, I thought had probably never picked up a crayon. He picked up pink and yellow florescent markers and he just covered his paper in pink and fluorescent pink and yellow. And I remember being so surprised by that is, it was so different than my expectation of what that was going to bring. So you're describing that made that memory come forward.

Anne Bonnefin

And really is a you know, the process of not therapist is to sort of unpack that and say what surprised you about them? What does that mean to you? What was about? Yes. So that's what we're really taught a lot, which is, you know, people talk about symbols and there's a lot of new age stuff around and out there about, you know, the meaning of of archetypes and all sorts of things. But really, it's about what meaning does it have you? You know, if I see a snake up my door, that might have a totally different meaning for me as an indigenous person, you know, Or if I was an indigenous person, which I'm not, but, you know, for me I might be totally afraid of it. But for an indigenous person, that may have a totally different and so really, and that comes back to interpretation of dreams, you know, Um uh, really people have to explore that for themselves and the symbolism for themselves. So, you know, finding metaphor in life, you know, helps us meaning of our own lives. But when I think of art when I think about. It's about that creative expression. It's not actually about the artwork itself, and a lot of people think that that's what art there your art is about. And I think much more interested in that process that come. You know, the process beyond that. The expression with that is So, um, what's the creative energy that it's carrying? What's the meaning behind? That's what really gets me excited, that about things. Because when you think about it Christ used so many symbols, you know, um, living water, the bread of life, you know, seeds, the vine growing those sorts of things. And I think it's kind of interesting that we've created churches, you know, maybe the first churches where the sitting in groves and looking out at lakes. We just create these four square walls and so shut ourselves of from, um, you know that that kind of creative expression. So the answer is a way to to use the imagination to tap into that that natural sense that we have of the experiencing world. So, you know, if you imagine somebody to sit, sit by some water and what does the water look like? And what is that? How do you feel about that? You know, what is it making feel you feel? I Two days ago, I took my son, we were practicing my son and I and my granddaughter were practicing social distancing. So we took to cars to the national park, and, um, we went I took Joshua to a place that I've never taken you before, But Peter and I used to go there, and it was quite a journey into the walkway. What were on had been eroded by water. And it was a bit muddy because it's been raining here quite a bit. We, I'm sure Josh with. But where is Mom? Take me. This isn't an easy wolf. He had to carry little Isla who is 2.5, you know, But it was the most beautiful day and the birds were singing. It was just a perfect, perfect day. Um, this time of year in Sydney can be beautiful. Sunny because it's not too hot. Not too cold. No mosquitoes, no flies. You know, you have to worry about those things. And we ended up in this creek, and we just um, the creek was bubbling and it's the creek. Um, has had sand in the bottom and it was crystal clear, but it was only so shallow and little Isla we took all the clothes off. She's only 2.5 and Joshua brought her swimmers, and we just let it, you know, jump in the creek. And for a while I asked Joshua I wanted to video this creep to make the meditation. Josh, where, um went up the creek away and he was video informing and I just I spent 10 minutes. We've Isla there she was in the water, picking up rocks, and she would throw the rock in the water and just most the life or giggle. I wish I had a video. It just must joyful expression. And then we were in this little creek that was staying and not a sound off off the world going on around us. We were just in this little kind of cocoon of nature, and I I remember thinking, um, it took me a couple of days, but a couple of days later, I thought

that joy was just overwhelming. It touches could feel the joy she way having. But I wonder where that joys in my life? What are the rocks that I pick up just for the sake of it and let them splash and feel how that feels, and and, um And I thought, I'm gonna I'm gonna draw that. I'm gonna, you know, kind of experience that again by just feeling what that feels like. And then, thinking where is that in my life? Where do I find that in my life? That's what you know, finding creative expression is about finding the metaphor in my life. And it's, you know, God is speaking all around us, and we we kind of, um, we're sort of rushing on the highway through life, so art is sort, art and creative expressions about getting off the highway and, you know, taking the road less traveled, going a bit slower and just noticing what's around noticing the details.

Karin Peter

So what I hear what I hear in this description is that you're asking us to be more aware. To really practice, practice awareness and then find ways to, um, find ways to express it that have meaning for us?

Anne Bonnefin

Yes, and own your own inner wisdom

Karin Peter

And your own connection.

Anne Bonnefin

Well, I was going to say one of my teachings says there is always a message of love. And, um so, you know, whatever circumstances were in, um, whatever. Whatever symptom we have, there's always a message of love, and I think that fits well with creative Community of Christ theology. You know, it was in a sense, it's not that. Oh, gosh, you know, God has made this terrible situation with the Coronavirus. It can I find the message of love within the circumstances of my life?

Karin Peter

So that is the reality that we're in as we record this episode. And and so one of the things I was hoping we could talk about is what are some experiments, if you will, in art and spirituality that folks who are at home who are sheltering in place or staying in that they might engage in either people who live alone or people, adult people or even families with children. But there's some things that they could do at home that might help them, uh, experience a little bit of what you're talking.

Anne Bonnefin

Okay, I thought a bit about these in terms of you know, hopefully, the audience that I kind of understand what I'm talking to. Um, but one of the things that we often will do in a when we come together. And if I was having a therapy session with someone, the first thing I would do is to spend a bit of time in meditation and just what you know, creating a quiet space. So however you do that is kind of, you know, the first part of processes and gathering materials all things around you that that you can that you enjoy using that that you respond by nice into.

But I was speaking how, maybe you could listen to some uplifting music. Um, and you know, one of my favorite hymns in the Community of Christ Hymnal is the hymn, Oh God we call. Oh God we call, from deep inside we yearn. From deep inside we yearn. From deep inside young for you. And imagine singing that in the in the first person. You know? Oh God I call. Oh God I call. Oh God I call for you. From deep inside I yearn. And then, you know, allowing that song just to really wash over you and then allowed. And whatever comes from an expression of that, what is that yearning? Try to feel into that and just be a playful about that and not, um, or you might, you might have some clay. You might have a bit of clay. Or, um um, you might sculpt that. What is that yearning? What? What is it that, um that that connection, that that calling, How does that expressing is your life. And then you might journal about that and see what imagines But one of the things use, you know, it's not that I even though I have been an artist all my life when I took on this process of you, the idea of using the art is an expression and has therapy. Um, that is a connection to spirit. I put aside all my my ideas of what good art is, or I put aside my judgment off, you know, all the things I learned at school about line and color, and and I just allow whatever comes like a child, you know, which would get it like you watch child get up paints. Like Isla throwing rocks in the water. It's just allowing that whatever comes, you know that expression because it's expression than the connection to that spirit limits, you know, kind of, it's a bit like Lectio Divina, but instead of responding in where you can respond using art as a way of connecting on deep, listening to what God has to say in your life. So that's one thing. And I was thinking, um um, I've got a poem which I can read which I thought would be kind of cool. It's only a short little, um, and it's along a similar line and that this poem's called Breath. It's by Christine Valters Painter. "This breathing in is a miracle, this breathing out, release, this breathing in a welcome to the unseen gifts which sustain me each moment, this breathing out a sweet sigh, a bow to my mortality, this breathing in a holy yes to life, this breathing out a sacred no to all that causes me to clench and gasp, this breathing in is a revelation, this breathing out freedom." So like doing Lectio Divina or in a deep listening to through a passage of Scripture. You could read that a poem or listen to that poem a few times and notice what stands out to you. And then with your art materials prepared already, you can draw all use a Coptic make collage. In response to that, whatever comes out, um, playfully not judgementally. And remember, remembering it's not about finished artwork at all, you know, it's It's about what insights, what wisdom? What did this spiritual truths come to you in the process and what comfort perhaps comes in that process and being aware. And like you said, that deep awareness off of your own emotional and spiritual connection? Um, um, I thought, you know, with children, um, there's a a guy, a gentlemen, have you ever heard of Mark Stanton Welch? He uses the song like mantra, You know, in a mantra about giving online focus so he would use own that way. And, um, one of the songs that, um that I just love so much abuse in and toward it to people here in Australia. You It was a song that goes like these. I am I Well, uh, you saw and imagine, You know, teaching that to Children and getting them to close their eyes and just imagine what that feels like and what that looks like. What does it look like? Being full of love and full of light, Um, and full of pace and have control of that. You know, I have seen that and close to realizing and feel into that and then have control that, um or or you can have Children imagine they're super heroes and have, um, and think about and they've got power to heal the world. And what, what with the nine day and look with the palace day and have them draw that and have them find, um, ways to explore that and help them to say that

maybe they have some of those powers already within him. So there's a couple of things, you know? So, you know, last year, um, during the Australia Harold. Oh, we in one of the additions, we ask people to, um, send images of their sacred space, and overwhelmingly they sent pictures of nature and, you know, helping Children to adjust. I don't know, like for us. You with were still allowed to go into the bush. Maybe we're not with. We've been told the beaches of bad because too many people works having fun of the beaches. But sometimes, you know, we're allowed to walk and neighborhood And, you know, allowing Children perhaps to have that time and and maybe, you know, explore nature and looking at looking at leaves and and exploring tide pools or or dancing in the rain. Or, you know, those sorts of things help Children explore and connect with spirit. Connect with their spirituality. So I think nature, connecting with nature is, um, you know, one of the most important ways to help Children understand the connection with God.

Karin Peter

Even in this time of pandemic, if it's given simply going out and sitting in the grass.

Anne Bonnefin

Yes, listening to the birds. And you have such wonderful bird sounds in there and watching the squirrels and, you know, just really looking at the grass, the colors, How many colors can you find? Can you find all the colors of the rainbow around you, exploring the wonder you know, teaching kids to wonder, to name, whether it is using a piece of clay or or um, sitting on a rock quietly listening to bird some, you know, giving them those places to connect to this year and and only venturing. Do you understand that? That feeling the breeze you know this so much symbolism, metaphor all around them, the strength in rocks and hell, how trees bend. Bend with the Braves. How how trees connect with deep roots. And what of those that you can get them to draw trees and his adults we can draw a tree. And where were one of the that one of those things that connect us to to strengthen us. What are those spiritually connections that form deep roots in our lives? What are the branches? What are the birds in our branches singing and and draw that and then think about it and explore that what nourishes us, what gets its nourishment.

Karin Peter

I've been sitting at my computer now, all of two weeks, and you're making me want to get out all my markers and all of my pens and and begin. I'm just just hearing the excitement in your voice as you share this and knowing how passionate you are not just about art and about your art, but about how God works in our lives through all different avenues. Yes, and I have heard you share about your wanting people to just liberate themselves and be able to enjoy it.

Anne Bonnefin

Yes. I mean, you know that we have that deep yearning within. And God has a deep yearning for us to connect. And we're on this highway, you know? Take a minute. You know, take a minute to breathe and to, you know, if if anything, When Peter passed away, that's his a deep grieving taught me that life is so precious. And to really take time to to value that that every moment and art can take you there and take you to to Like I said, could be that could be in the

hands just holding for a moment the water holding the intangible, the mystery. Art can be that sort of vessel. Yeah, you can. You can create, um, out of clay. You can create a vessel that holds your intentions and then write your intentions and put them in there. A beautiful symbol. I talked. I talked in The last Australian Herald, how my little granddaughter loved opening and shutting doors and in my house. And we would play this little game and she go into the kitchen and shut the door. Then she knock on the door, and then her mother came over and said, Oh, Isla stop playing with the door, You know, on I realized how Isla and I played with that door all the time. It was one of the things we enjoy doing. Extensive, different realities, I guess so. Different spaces. And it was a safe door shut, the lock was right at her height so she could go, now we know a lot of doors knobs are really high for kids. This is an old door and she going in out of it. And, um, I was sharing that with my classmates, and we have to practice, with studying counseling. We have to practice counseling with each other. I was talking about, um, moving forward in my life. And how was I going to create this, uh, kind is a practice of of being an art therapist and how that was gonna work with my job, which all the other things that I'm doing, and I probably was expressing a bit of anxiety or fear around, you know, moving forward into into being an art therapist, and and my girlfriend said to me So you let your granddaughter go in and out of doors, but you're too afraid to let himself didn't have the have the enjoyment of that. So just in putting that in a metaphoric way, just opened up so much of understanding about my own life. My own sense of meaning in my own life there. So you know they are. You know, that awareness around this this God is speaking to us all the time in every way. I've been too busy to listen. that was it's a really wonderful thing of yes, I can step forward out of joy. It doesn't have to be moving forward out of anxiety. That could be really interesting things. Um, in the future, you know that the change can be joyful and to look for the joy in that rather than look it up in a and, um, even in in church settings I took that extrapolated that out to my congregation. You know what joy is waiting for us if we move in different ways. If we explore and take risks. And I think in this day and age we were kind of cocooning ourselves. But But where? Where are the doorways that we can open up. You know, that just involves sitting and praying and lighting a candle on being present and taking some paints out and exploring music and song, poetry. All those things dance, even dance even!

Karin Peter

So in your own journey. You've been an artist all your life. You, um, engage in the spiritual practices, and you've learned that those are intertwined in your own life. What has been a most meaningful to you in this journey with both art and spirit? If you will.

Anne Bonnefin

I guess the deep connection that we can have with God and each other and that they are one in the same in some ways because the deeper I can experience God, and the deeper I can connect you, um, they influencing it's It's almost the same thing that God is in, God is in the relationship, so that that's the really meaningful to me. And I guess the importance of being intentional, no weak and giving places for people creating spaces for people to be intentional and to access their own inner wisdom. Um, it's really, just recently in this in this new class, you know, there are people from so many different perspective who come from so many different perspectives. There are indigenous people there. There are people from other cultures. And to come into a

route that is quite diverse and yet to be able to express things, that so deep and meaningful, helps us in line, create community and so to me, that's really exciting to create those spaces for people to be able to understand them themselves better. So probably one of the most meaningful things in my recent study is that I didn't realize that I would gain so much more of an appreciation of nature. And I didn't realize that the study of art would take me further in my understanding of God and my, um, my place in this world. Um so I guess that's very meaningful to me. That that deep a sense of awareness, you know, years ago, I started studying meditation, or I, um, I started because I wanted to be more intentional anymore, um aware kind of be more away, my love. And this process is taking me it also down that you know that saying kind of joining about being like so, you know, at the Aboriginals have when they draw the indigenous Australians, when they then draw carvings on a rock and also now draw carvings off human figures. But they won't have a mouth they have ears, but no mouth and there since of spirituality is about listening. And so you know this statement listening to make that same last name for being learning how to listen deeply.

Karin Peter

So you were lovely enough to host me in your home for a few days, and while I was there, you shared some different resource is with me about some of the different topics that we were able to talk about. So are there any resource is that you could recommend to our listeners who are interested in exploring their spirituality through art?

Anne Bonnefin

Well, you know, one of the, um, one of the people, this is the most influential is in one exploration of odd has been Christine Valters Painter, um, and she has quite a few books about our and spirituality from them from a kind of guilty expecting, you know, the idea that God is everywhere and in everything. And so she has some wonderful walks from her that Christians would be really easily able to engage in talking about, like, job did vein. Or, you know, she has a wonderful ways of writing poetry in your exploring things. So I would really recommend she's written some wonderful, um, these senses about about that. So any of her works incredibly inspiration. Um, the work of John O'Donoghue. I don't know. Well, he wrote a wonderful book about pollution and his for community is just amazing. He talks about color, and he talks about different colors and their emotions. Emotional response to those His book is incredible. So it also is a wonderful book to take you into a deeper aware that so off nature, life and God's expression around us. Um, do you know the poems by David? Whyte. W H Y T E. Do you know his work, well he's amazing. Yeah. Um and then if a real a book that's maybe more on art therapist book is a book by Shaun McNiff, and he writes about art as medicine and art heals. Um, how creativity cures the soul. So it's not necessarily from a Christian perspective, but it's really interesting to understand from a more, maybe more clinical perspective about the importance of art and how how it can be useful for all of us. Not just, you know, people who are struggling with deep emotional wounds. The other person who has really includes bees, Johnny Baker and he's a theologian in England, kind of connected with the emerging faith movement in the UK. Did I? I don't know if I talk to you about him, he he wrote. I could give you the his website, but he he created labyrinths and he created. He did his whole thesis about labyrinths and the importance of ritual, and he made the most amazing labyrinth, which which I

created a couple of times spread church, and it's quite a modern and he very much has influenced my theology. But he's an artist, and I created so he's a wonderful way to kind of connect on spirituality, and he spaces about postmodernism and and and what, what it means to what? What is an expression of worshipping and what worship is? He has really influenced what the think, the chance that things that I will do a charity and create church, the environment it's about, you know, the idea that, um, creating a space of what's the word? You're curating a space, so creating an environment for people to explore and find their own meaning that's been very influential in in my life. And how I, how I approach worships so that so that people can take out of things what they need. Yeah, so that's kind of cool. And then two other people who I love so much of the movies. I've just been exploring Jan Richardson, and you didn't have had a fresh, amazing, amazing. There's another guy who lives in Australia Joe Mckerrow M C K E double R O W. And his videos are incredible, and he recites his poetry. So it again, you know, poets of being so the words of Christine Valters Painter that will take you into some practice, things that are very practical kind of some of practical exercises, but some of these other people are very much about poetry that you could explore art through. Read a poem or meditate on on the poem from some of these people and then explore that in the creative process. So they really interesting.

Karin Peter

So some of the things you've talked about and you put into your work with the Australia Herald. So I'd like before we close today, can you just share a little bit about your work with the Australia Herald?

Anne Bonnefin

Okay, so I've been designing that for about a year and a half, and we just, uh we had a vision to make our Australian publication more inclusive. And so we just thought what would be the ideal, And we threw everything up in the air. And, um, we wanted to say, what could we create that more missional? Can we come from a perspective, can we create something that I could share with my friends that I could share with my name? Um, that something that anyone would be proud to have on the coffee table, You know that they could pick it out every down then and just read it. And if there would be stories that would be helpful to anyone, Not just if you were in Community of Christ. So we looked at it from that angle, and the old publication was some pretty black wide, and we were lucky, now it's printed in color. And, you know, with we've tried to include more Australian content that we do use some of the stories from the US, Herald that we think are relevant people here, Um, and we were created kind of full categories. Um, did people look different things in publications? And so we we, the different cabinet got four categories. One is Think which is full articles to make you, you know, stretch your mind. You know, for people who really want to go a bit deeper in the theology or or, you know, explore concepts a bit deeper. And then But then we have stories that about living with compassion and following cross mission, that are a bit more heart based, so they're called Love. Those stories were categorised under love. Then we have, um, stories that we categorize on, or articles that we categorize on Prayer, which is about putting out spirituality, spirituality and practice. So that kind of practical things, um, and Katie Harmon-Mclaughlin you know her stories from the US Herald translates so well into those categories that we will use under there

because they're very practical things. You know, she gives us lots of, um, spiritually formation practices that we can continue in them. And then then we have the fourth category, which is Live, which is about living more consciously and and how we treat the world enough unions of living as, um as if life is sacred. And so they're very kind of practical ways that we might approach life and will often have a kid's article in there or something to kind of help parents to explain concepts to Children and or things that parents might be going through. And, um, help them kind of next stencil off how to explain difficult concepts. The kids might be Easter or Christmas. So you that can we explain those concepts to our Children and help them explore those things. So each month we choose a different thing. And we said that the tradition kinda hasn't unity to it. Um, and then we you know, that we kind of gather we try and gather stories or around that thing. Sometimes that works sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes we have a theme and and the stories, and we kind of go on a different journey. And we have not somebody different than where we started. And I'm always amazed how each edition, you know, it's like giving birth to a little baby because it edition sort of rights. Still, you know, we kind of it creates a bit of we end up with a bit of unity. Um, and so I'm very interested to kind of allow the spirit to breathe through each edition. You know, what is God wanting to say to us through this, And I'm very mindful of that. So, um, but I guess you know, being the artist and creating it, Um, I'm not sure some of the older people in our congregations kind of understand a bit. Um, I mentioned Johnny Baker before, and he he influenced me a great deal in how, um, it had the publication looks because he in his thesis, is he speaks about the inculturation of in a post modern world and and how to, you know, make faith relevant, you know, community, you know, culture. So he uses everyday symbols or every day music, things that happen every day just to kind of draw us into connection to God rather than thinking we have to just use, um you, a heart to symbolize something or across. You know, it may be shoes it may be feet on a roadway, you know, doesn't have to be a a picture is pathway. It might just be simply something that's right in from of me, it could be a cup, You know that using those every day beans, um, and bringing God brings God then into the every day. Not just so when the when you look at the publication, they might have every day images. But then maybe it helps people to realize what God is in my every day to its got isn't just out there all across the love that that Christ had on that cross is also with me now, can be can be where I am so using that, That's, um, that that's quite different, perhaps with what we've done in the past, in terms of how visually we've we've represented a Christian publication, Um, cause I'm hoping, you know, again, it's about awareness and helping people to see sign posts than experiencing God in their journey and in their every day. I don't know if people that's how people experience the experience it, but that's what I'm trying to bring to life.

Karin Peter

So I was able to look at several, um, volumes. Several additions of the Australia Herald and and the artwork is, as you describe it, it is the use of symbol and metaphor to help us re imagine, um, this spirit, working with us and to reimagine our participation in mission. And they're they're visually each one is a visual treasure. They're just really lovely in both the written content and the visual content in the balance of how it is presented. So I wanted to share with our listeners that if you would like to know more about the Australia Herald, you can read the content of of it. Or you can contact Ann through the Australia Mission Center

website Cofchrist.com/au and to see Ann's design work. You can Google Australia Herald by Anne Bonnefin.

Anne Bonnefin
Oh! Can you?

Karin Peter
You can! And you can browse a full color issue using the issue dot com link and that spelled I s s u e

Anne Bonnefin
Actually, you know we have Sorry. Sorry.

Karin Peter
Nope! Go ahead!

Anne Bonnefin
We publish in flipsnats. And so all the additions are free for anybody to look at.

Karin Peter
Yes, this is free. Well, just google it. Yeah, if you can just google it, So yeah, uh, and you can browse a vocal er issue using the issue dot com link issuu.com , And, um and I pretty sure that you threw the Australia Herald on the website, You scroll down to the bottom where it is the contact information of staff information and the Australia Herald information is down there.

Anne Bonnefin
I think if anybody wanted to, we would be more than happy for people to subscribe. And so I think if anyone went to inquiries at cofchrist.com/au, we can sign them up and they could receive one every month. So and they see the online copies as well.

Karin Peter
Now there is an excellent invitation. Yeah, Yes, absolutely.

Anne Bonnefin
We're happy to increase our membership. We do have a look and every month, I think there's at least 10 people in the US and several in Canada and UK and other places. So, yes, we're happy to increase our readership because some, you know, as I said, we've tried to be very inclusive in the publication.

Karin Peter
And so Anne and we've come to the end of our time together. Is there any last thing you'd like to share with our listeners before we come to a close?

Anne Bonnefin

I just want to say that, to be open to a message of love that's always in alive, whatever the circumstances on whatever, um, you know, they're going through just to There's always a message of love and to be our issue, exploring that

Karin Peter

Thank you. Anne for being our guest today on Project Zion. If you again would like to contact. And you could do so through the Australia Mission Center website which you can find on cofchrist.org. I'm Karin Peter. This has been our episode on art and spirituality. Thanks for listening.

Josh Mangelson

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