

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.

Brittany Mangelson

Hello, everyone. Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is your host, Brittany Mangelson, and I'm really excited about the conversation we're going to have today. It's going to be part of our No Filter series which is where we talk about faith and sex and sexuality. And I'm not sure if I branded our conversation that way with our guests. So hopefully that's not a shock to you two.! Hopefully that doesn't scare you off, but we have on Lisa Meyer and Erin Cavanaugh, and this is kind of another, I wouldn't say necessarily follow up, but kind of something in the same vein as when I interviewed Nancy Ross recently with her hashtag queer pastor and I just kind of realized that we needed to have more representation from just different types of pastors and different types of leadership priesthood leadership in the church. So Lisa and Erin, I'm not gonna introduce you too much. I'd like you to do that yourselves, So take it away.

Lisa Meyer

Okay. Um, my name is Lisa Meyer, and I have been in the church for generations upon generations, but definitely went through some struggles when I came out. My family is like fifth generation or something silly like that, and then when I came out and met her when I met Erin and came out and we got together, we have a lot of struggles. I'm in the church and for a while we consider leaving The church tried out some other congregations of different denominations and weren't really happy there, either, and came back and found our place and our niche. And it's really been a a great trip so far, but I'm assuming we'll explore that a little more detail later.

Erin Cavanaugh

I'm Erin Cavanaugh I converted to the church, actually when I was in high school. And do ministry at our congregation have been a lot of work with Gala, run some queer ministry and our home state right now. We try to do a lot of things on advocacy about social justice and feminism and just LGBT representation in the church.

Brittany Mangelson

And you are also both of you, the parents to three kids, which and I only bring that up because we a recording early in the morning on a Friday morning because as three moms to each of us, have three kids. Ah, it's you just kind of got a fit things in where you can. And if this is, I'm just really excited to have this conversation. So Erin and Lisa, let's talk a little bit more about your background in the church. So I know that you two have very different stories. So I guess let's start with Lisa. And you said that you have a long generational history within the church. So I'm wondering what that looked like for you as you were coming out? I mean, how old were you when you came out or did you understand? Well, And I guess first, I would like to know how you identify as far as orientation and pronounce and things like that go?

Lisa Meyer

My pronouns are she, her, hers, Um, and I identify as a lesbian. My coming out process was kind of tricky. Um, I guess that I had been in the church for a long time. I was already doing ministry. I had a priest to call. Um, I was serving in the office of teacher. Um I went to Graceland for four years. I kind of did the whole church thing like that was a big part of my life. I was running a lot of Youth Ministries, probably more than the creation I was in had ever seen before. And then I met Erin and we fell in love, and that was tricky really, really tricky coming out to my family, who is also in the church coming out. Teoh trip leadership was tricky. There was a point in time when they kept taking things away from me like different ministries that I was doing. They took it away to go. I took it away, and then they, um they asked me to give up, my priest said, and so that if I didn't give it up that it would that I would be silenced. And so I turned over my card that day that was actually at a church campground. But I did that. So I either needed to break up with Erin or turn in my priesthood, and so I chose to turn in my priesthood, not knowing what I know now. Like that didn't have to happen, but that that's what I understood to be the thing. And then finally there was a point where I said, OK, so you're telling me all these things that I can't do in the church? What can I do? You know, like I just wanted something because the church was such a huge part of my life? Is that what can I do in the church? And they said, Oh, we have to get with the mission's president or region president time and you need to know, you know, things and and finally they came back to me and they they didn't come back to me. I kept coming back to them and asking, you know, what can I do? What can I do? What I do? And they sat me down one day and they said, Well, we decided that you can clean the church and I said, Well, I don't mind doing that, you know, I was doing that to like that, but that just felt like such a such a downplay of the ministry that I have been doing before. It was really, really, really hurtful, and But I stayed and I cleaned the church and, you know, we did the things he did because it was so important in our lives. Um, and that was that was probably my biggest story related to coming out with the church. And I know Erin has another story that she typically shares that also applies to both of us.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah. Wow, I just I just want to comment, you know, the fact that you were doing ministry at camps and different places with actual humans, and then to be told that you know your relational side of your ministry was no longer accepted and you were only good enough to clean the church. I mean again, like, not that That's a terrible ministry. You know, you said you were already doing it, but it seems significant that they took out that relationship aspect of ministry and said, "Here's your building. Clean it." That's really, really awful.

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, I mean, I was running our young Peacemakers Club weekly. I was doing a Youth venture for Christ monthly for teens. I was running a teen Bible study. I was doing all kinds of things with Children and youth because that was a good fit for me. It was something that I was interested in, but also because I think sometimes in some congregations, if you're under 30 that's your job, is you think us obviously you must know you. So I kind of a pigeon holed in there. But I loved it and I did well with it. Um and then it was gone. And probably the saddest

thing to me is that most of the ministries that I was doing died when they took me out of them, like within a matter of two or three months, they were gone. And so those opportunities just weren't there for the Children and youth anymore. And to see the congregation that we had attended go downhill so significantly, there was probably I never saw. There was probably 100 people, maybe 100 20 on big Sundays when I left. And now that same congregation that we no longer attend but has probably 30 people, and that's such a huge drop, and not that much time. It's really sad to me.

Brittany Mangelson
Wow.

Erin Cavanaugh
It's hard to see so many these so many of those youth too, like fall away from the church like they no longer had a place to be engaged because Sunday morning was a hard place for them to connect and so a lot of them just fall away from the church and have no connection anymore because those ministries ended.

Lisa Meyer
People that we're trying to bring back again now as young adults and young families that we're trying to bring them back into the ministries that we're doing now. But there was such a elapsed there. Some of them probably never will.

Erin Cavanaugh
Yeah, and some of them I talked to recently and it's because the church really abandoned them, and there was there was for youth and the youth group when that happened, they they're unable to heal those wounds because it's been two full, like the ministry being torn away, churches being terrible to them. And I don't I don't know where to start and helping them to heal those wounds.

Brittany Mangelson
Yeah, that's so tragic. Just this idea that if you take out kind of the backbone of a really, really important ministry keeping kids in, which is what community high school is, what a lot of denominations goal is. I mean, you know we need but Teoh have that just kind of fall apart as soon as a really important minister that's holding things together is forced to step away like I can't think of much That's more tragic than that. That's really, really devastating. So, Erin, what about you? You said that your convert eso what did that conversion story look like? And how did that impact when you came out and just that part of your story?

Erin Cavanaugh
Yeah. So one of my best friends growing up, her grandma, who's raising her, was really, really involved in the church, and she invited me to youth camps with her. So I started going to camps with her. I was raised Catholic, and when I went to my first camp, I My God, was had a lot of concerns that seems worried about me getting converted. And when I was there Ah, there was a baptism that I witnessed, and it was really scary for him. And so he said, You can't go back.

That's scary. Um, I'm worried about you, like leading to have a church, so I didn't go back for a long time. And then when my parents got divorced, my mom's like, I don't care, Go to camp. This isn't bad. It's just a scam and so windy camp. And it was really transformative and it was a pivotal moment in my life and to me, really like turning my life in a direction where I was able to make healthier choices for myself. Or was it making healthy choices in high school little times and I kind of got me stuff like, cleaned up and she got her and it was a big fight. My dad really, really struggled with me converting to this church because he'd been raised Catholic, um, Irish Catholic. It was a huge piece of his identity and still is today and really is an important piece of my identity. So when I left Catholicism's, it was it was a breakdown in our relationship. There was a lot of pain, a lot of arguments, and I had to fight it so hard to get into this church that when this church turned its back on me, I wasn't willing to quit. I was like, Nah, I fought really hard to be here and so you guys to try to kick me out. But I thought to get in here so I'm not leaving and that capped me here because I fought so hard and I felt bad, cold. Me into this church so strongly that I was like, I'm not leaving like this is my homes. This is where I belong. This is where I feel whole and so that can't be here. And every time, like we had some terrible things happen in our congregation in addition to what Lisa shared. Um, and I kept coming back, coming back until they heard us really, really bad one time. And that was the moment when I broke away and started going to other churches. And even when we went for just never find my soul and so I kept searching, coming back to a community of Christ, cause I know these other These aren't right. These aren't right. This isn't where I'm called to be. And so I kept coming back. That makes sense. I think the story of what happened is important, too, to tell. So we have three daughters, and there are everything. Ah, and when we we, um we stayed until we had kids and continue to fight congregation life, our congregation wasn't very supportive at any point in time. And we found Gala and they were really supportive to us, and Gala was actually the place that we were able to turn when we were starting to form our family and we were going through IVF and trying back will process, which is just so emotionally draining and were able to go to a GALA retreat. And that guilt retreat was the first people really told that we were doing this at an administration had our gala family pray us through IVF and through the pregnancy, which was a really difficult pregnancy, at least was in the hospital lot getting dehydrated, super sick. So GALA held us through that, um and they were our church home for a long time when we didn't have a church home. And then we did still go, though, to to that congregation that was so hurtful to us until one Sunday we were having a pastor's election, and my daughter had been born at this point, and I went to talk to the pastor, the person who was, you know, putting his name forward for pastor. And I said, Well, how do you feel about Lisa and I's relationship and the conversation proceeded to be him going down this rabbit hole, talking about how when our daughter had a baby busting those people who didn't come because she was a daughter of, you know, to lesbians and that wasn't OK and that there's people who don't think that we should even have a child and that she should exist and all of these terrible things. And it destroyed me and like, you can be mean to me all day and I'll sit here and take it. But when you are mean to my baby, who's just this tiny, sweets like bundle of innocents like not even a year old and done? And that was when we left,

Lisa Meyer

The Mama Bears came out and we we left and we I mean, we've never been back to that congregation regularly.

Erin Cavanaugh

But we have family is still attend there, and that's really hard that they know what happened and that that's still there's their home. That hurts. And we we left and tried a bunch of other churches, which were terrible fits, and one of our friends at the time, kept inviting us to this little church out middle of the country and then, like you're real pretty. And I think it's great that you think that this little country church is gonna be welcoming to a queer folk. But like we went to the city church and it was terrible. So I don't know why you think this church, like in a hayfield and a Christmas tree farm is going to be welcoming. And I pushed back real hard thing like I understand the country. I understand real life. That's not where I'm going. And she was very, very persistent. And he finally went there. And they love us back in the wholeness. And that's where right now.

Brittany Mangelson

So did it take them some time to welcome you? Or was it just like an instant fit?

Erin Cavanaugh

Instant, I think.

Lisa Meyer

Instant, I think. And I'm not sure if they welcomed us more because we were new blood and they knew we would do stuff because they really, like, understood the whole concept of welcoming LGBT folks. But either way, I think that they definitely were. They were so helpful and and after we moved, we have a situation where we got some threatening phone calls. Um and they prayed us through that, and we're very supportive through that. They were really good with us, really going to us.

Erin Cavanaugh

I think the congregation in a whole because When I look back at the history of the congregation that we're at now, they've had this pattern of taking and broken people for different reasons and loving them back in the whole mess. And those people don't always stay, which is hard. But like I've seen this pattern over and over, when people come in that really broken and they become whole and then they go on to do really cool ministry, and that's just like it's been different reasons of broken mess. Right now, our niche is the queer community, but they bring people to hold us in a way that had not seen in another carnation, and it's just really, really cool to see.

Brittany Mangelson

So I have a couple of just clarifying questions. So as we're talking about your story, what yearish are we talking about? Like when you two met and that who thing?

Lisa Meyer

2005 was the year that we started our relationship.

Brittany Mangelson

Okay cool. I think that just gives a framework of where of your story happened in relationship to national conference and things like that. And then I know that we have talked about GALA a lot on the podcast, but can you just give us a quick idea of what GALA is.

Erin Cavanaugh

So you want what it is to us or what it is currently?

Brittany Mangelson

Or I guess. Well, so we recently did a podcast on what it is currently with the current president and vice president, but maybe just go into a little bit more of how it supported you?

Erin Cavanaugh

Okay, so GALA was a spiritual home for us. We in the midst of all of this happening way, my grandma got really sick and she was in Florida and we had to go down to Florida. We live in Michigan and helped bring her back because she couldn't physically get back on her own. And so when we were on our way down there, we looked up to see if there was a welcoming church. And at the time there was two. That was back when WCN was inexistent. There was two churches in the world, literally. One was in Australia and one was in Florida an hour from my grandma's house. And so I'm like, Well, I guess we're going to church in Florida. So we went to this congregation, and it was the Clearwater Congregation and that, like finding that foundation walking and we felt so whole. They conducted us to GALA. Um, they invited us to our first gala retreat, and that kind of just, like, laid the pathway to everything. We went to that retreat. Ah, they welcomed us in. They loved us. And they were our family, Um, in so many ways when our family wasn't able to be there,

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, I think that was really a Godsidence that the first GALA retreat was only, like, five hour drive from our house because they've been all over the country like they. That's one of the things, the things around the country. And so the fact that it was close enough that we could get the time and the money and, you know, make that happen was really cool for our 1st one. And after that, we were hooked.

Erin Cavanaugh

Yeah, it became a huge part of her life. I was on the board and many capacities. I was involved with the writing of the book Touched by Grace. I helped facilitate retreats, helped with conference planning, advocacy and encompass so much of who we were for many, many years. And I'm so grateful for that. And so grateful for those experiences.

Brittany Mangelson

And then Erin, you eventually became president. And Lisa, you were treasurer, Is that correct? Yeah, OK, Yeah. So just heavily, heavily involved. And like I said, we've had Well, we've had Erin on before, um, to talk about GALA and being president of GALA. And then we have recently had the new president of Harmony, which is the merged organization of W CN and GALA on to talk about what they're doing now. But yeah, I just wanted to give them a little bit of a shout out again because I know that they were so important in so many church member lives. And so thank you.

Erin Cavanaugh

They've even lead into the ministry. And the work that we're doing now, like in the church and outside of the church were leading non non religious based retreats. Right now, in the state of Michigan, we're doing an annual LGBT family retreat. We're doing a support group in our community now. Once month, we hold LGBT support groups and education. Our church for the first year was the host site. So we had the support groups and education. All of them were held in our building. Um, and we helped the church sponsored the treat the first year. And so because of the work to that gala did like they've opened more doors and are continuing to do ministry in other ways we don't even know about.

Lisa Meyer

Well, we've also done a series of, um, welcoming workshops around the state, and we're gonna pick those back up again this next year to try to help congregations understand what LGBTQ means and how they could be involved in how they can show love.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, you're doing such important work. And I really it sounds like you kind of patterned after is a model of gala and the retreats and workshops and things like that. So it's really, really, really important work, because I know, especially in your neck of the woods up in Michigan, it seems like there's really pockets of really accepting places and then pockets that struggle and that haven't encountered a lot of LGBTQ people and or at least that they know of. But they might not be aware of the particular issues that that community faces at the hands of cis, straight people. So cis, straight church people, I should say, particularly

Lisa Meyer

One of the things that I've really enjoyed was they, we were asked to go in that presented at camp directors training on how to welcome LGBT Q kids and staff into camps. And that was that was a really neat experience that kind of was validating or asked, You know that we could help paves the way kind of for people who do not have as many struggles as we do.

Erin Cavanaugh

They did, and it was fantastic because is there as a result of that, we ended up having, ah, trans youth that are came one of the camps that I worked at that summer, and the camp was so incredibly welcoming to her and made her mom feel safe, leaving her there like without her, says staff member. All like it created state camp experiences for this, this young lady,

Brittany Mangelson

and I'm sure that that was so amazing to see, considering the background that you two have, and knowing what feeling completely excluded feels like and then to be able to turn around and be the one that welcomes a very vulnerable youth into the camping experience I But that was just a full, full circle experience that you had

Erin Cavanaugh

It was. It is incredible.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, So let's talk a little bit about National Conference. I'm curious to know how that played out from your perspective, Like the timeline of where you were at with the church. Were you involved with that at all? Were you quietly watching? I mean, what did that it's experience look like for you?

Erin Cavanaugh

So I was really involved. I have been in GALA leadership throughout throughout conference, leading up to it the conference before that one of the big things that I have met with church leadership to talk about, um advocating for community, how important inclusion was and literally have. It was saving lives. And you had to do this and and they have been really respectful and listen was involved in planning services at conferences. And one of the big things that we did was the book. So the Touched By Grace book We have this this amazing lady here in Michigan. Her name is Sharon Gernaat and she took on this mission where she felt that she needed to give the tough by grace book to as many people as she could. She started with Homosexual Saints and then moved to Touched By Grace. And she bought hundreds of these books and we would just give them to people so she would get a hold of me and say, Erin, I have another 100 books. I have money coming in and gonna get books, and she just purchased 100 books and then we would go out congregations and give them away. She would give him what gave him away at our local mission center floor, um, conference with booth there and just handed out these books and talked about the importance of the story. And the stories were what was so important. And, I think just so critical in helping conference to happen is people realizing that we're real people with feelings and families and that we go through the same stuff that you do that that made it not a political issue. It made a human issue, and that was what I think made a difference.

Brittany Mangelson

So can you talk about those books a little bit more? Because I actually don't think that we've really talked about the books and, like specifically on Project Zion before. So what did the books contain?

Erin Cavanaugh

So there's two books Homosexual Saints by Bill Russell and then Touched by Grace, which the author on it is David Howard. I'll go into that a little bit, too. Um, David or Bill Russell's book was the first book that came out that told the story of the LGBT community. Told the story of how,

like welcoming or exclusion it happened in the church has a little a literal historical narrative timeline in it that helps you to understand if you're not sure how those things happen. And they just told the story of like people coming to the church being excluded, and a lot of it was the pain and then needed to be told. And it's this powerful story of the pain that people felt and then Touched by Grace, we wanted to tell the story some more. We knew there was time for a second book and in that book ended up being a lot of hope and healing and resiliency. And so it was reflected. I think the church's journey of this was the pain of being LGBT and growing up in the church, and then this was our hope and our hope for conference. Our hope for everything I hoped for, You know, us in the future, in the church. And that was that was the story it was. And it didn't only include up individuals. The first book was people's narratives in the Church. The second book had a lot of personal narratives. We said, I stories are both in the air, but it also had congregations. So the Clearwater Church had a congregation story in there. Um, Colorado. What's any of that congregation? I'm sorry, you guys, if you listen to it. Their congregation! Their story in there, which is so incredibly powerful about how they went from being split to 100% supporting them, becoming a welcoming congregation. And it was a book of hope in a book of coming to believing that these things could happen if that makes sense.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, and I just want to say that we will be sure to link the books and other podcasts. I mean, I've already mentioned a couple podcasts that we've done on this general topic, and I will be sure the link everything in the description in this episode. So if you're wondering, how do I get a book, or how do I listen to more. I just wanna make sure right now I say it'll all be there for you. Those books are really, really important, and I've read both of them. And Sharon has provided several boxes of books to the Salt Lake congregation. We've given them out, and it's really impactful for people to hear stories that sound like their own that they can see themselves in the eyes and stories and voice of another person. It's been very, very validating for people.

Erin Cavanaugh

Representation matters more than you can ever understand. It's so huge. Um, I don't know if you can link it to W. C. N When the first book came out, Bill Russell's book Homosexual Saints. They did a study guide, and a lot of congregations were even using that for, Um, I see a lot like timber down, but like a lot of welcoming congregations and and just put a safe places were using that is a Sunday school material or uh, meeting once a week and studying it, and they would read the stories and then you have supporting Resource is to do in conjunction with it, and I believe it's a free downloadable. Pdf But you have to track look a little to get that document.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, I will, for sure. I have not seen that. So now I'm gonna be on the hunt for it, and we will link it as well.

Erin Cavanaugh

It's a great resource. So I did want to come back to and make sure I talked a little bit about I said I would talk about the author on the second book. Yes, the author is a board. We compiled the stories, and we as we met, um, David Howard's house and read all of these narratives and edited them and pile them. And it was it was such a labor of love. And in the process of compiling them, David Howard unexpectedly died. We were supposed to have a retreat. I'm Friday, and he had an aneurysm on the Wednesday before was to fly out he passed away. Um, and so as a result, we dedicated the book to him, and I don't think I can talk about and you gave me a heads up attacking little conference on this podcast, and I kept thinking about David, and I don't think I can talk about those things without talking about him and all of the work that he did and think sitting on conference for when it passed, I was still filled with excitement but also so much sadness for the fact that David never saw that, that so many LGBT people who didn't make it to that day didn't get to see a day where the church welcomed some. And those were some of the things I talk, I think about you like it was so filled with joy when the resolution when it passed, but also just so much heartache for those who didn't make it. And for those who had left the church and would never know, this change came and would never come back. So that's important to talk about.

Brittany Mangelson

I think it is, too, and I think that it's really easy for us who didn't personally lived through that and that exclusion. It's important for us to understand that our collective oppression against a community has lasting impact and how tragic that people weren't able to see us get our act together, really. How tragic is it that through death or through stepping away, that that that that wasn't realized, you know? So, yeah. Thank you for bringing that up. I think that it's really, really important to acknowledge. So thank you.

Erin Cavanaugh

Yeah, I know that when I when I think back to conference one of the first things like I hugged my wife, obviously. But one of the first things I did was I found my friend Sander on the conference floor like we hugged. And both for, like, I know David knows this somewhere. So, like, that's something I think important to think about two, like the on the Conference for LGBT. People were also remembering the people physically weren't there and think of those people also.

Brittany Mangelson

Which is probably a very different reaction than a lot of straight people had. You know, they were probably having their own personal reaction. And yet the LGBTQ community was also thinking about those who couldn't be there in one way or another. And I think that that's that's a really, uh, important distinction. When we talk about the reaction to National Conference, I think that that's a really important distinction to bring up. So thank you,

Erin Cavanaugh

I think, and I don't I don't know if it's a contender suddenly into it, I think Lisa might be able to talk a little bit of her conference experience to because there's so many emotions. Yeah, she had family who walked off the conference floor.

Brittany Mangelson

Wow. Yeah, I was just gonna ask Lisa how your experience was.

Lisa Meyer

That was a struggle. Like, we've loved being a conference and one of the things that we've done because we had little kids and we we didn't have, you know, a lot of extra resource is, and so we went and stayed kind of next door to my parents. And my parents have not historically than supportive and still probably are the most supportive people that we often don't talk about it. Uh, but we have little kids, and so we would switch off, you know, And these people would work skills that will be at the conference and all that. And so we were intimately involved with their conference experience to, and they were not in favour. Uh uh, the resolutions. And so we sat next to them, and it was really it was a struggle, Like I remember at one point, my mom, like, went up to put her name in the que. And I'm like, Oh, my gosh, what is she gonna say, You know, like, what kinds of things is she gonna share on the conference floor That's going to hurt. And so kind of like stealing myself up t okay. And she really I think she put herself in three. We were rating in numbers like, are you a one not supportive at all? Are you a five? Totally supportive. And are you in between or whatever? And And they were kind of alternating off who was speaking? And I think she hooked herself in it like a two or three and, you know, told a little bit of her story and it was not as scary is I was afraid it was going to be because she could be very out spoken about things that she believes strongly in. Um, and one of the things this is kind of a side note, but one of the things that I love so much about the conference is how much people were willing to dialogue. One of my favorite stories was a guy stood up, and he's like, I'm a one, and I want to have lunch with the five like, you know, like I want to know I want to hear your story. I want to see where you're at and just the willingness to dialogue, which is not something we often see today in our world. I remember that story and I loved it. But when the votes did come down and it was clear that there was an overwhelming majority in support of of all of these resolutions, my parents got up and said, Okay, it's time to go and they walked off the floor and that was really hard. And of course, their response was what we wanted to get out before all the traffic started. And, you know, like, Oh, all the reasons that they could come up with to make their behavior or acceptable But most of the people around us were not supportive. Not only them, but other people from our missions are because Michigan is a really conservative mission center in the church and and they were definitely a lot of people who we're not supporting that supportive of, of LGBT ministry not supportive of LGBT marriage, and that was really hard. And so again we leaned on that gala family that we had kind of created in our Gaelic community and we we really were able to kind of celebrate together. But there were. I'm not as many people as I thought would walk off, but more than I would have liked.

Erin Cavanaugh

It hurt that it was our immediate family that walked off. And it was in sitting because you said in your geographical area conference and and we had people there that were really supportive. Everyone wore rainbow lanyards, which was really powerful Gala handed out free rainbow lanyards to whoever came to our booth. And so you could look around and literally see Grimble lanyards across the conference. Um, and there wasn't as many in our section, and I just

remembered feeling like in my own section, it was like, tolerate the center, but I love you and, like it just also grow sometimes sitting there and I just kept coming back to like, the places you come back to. Those those places you can hold on. He gets through it. Um, and one of my favorite pictures of conference set that year was the Rainbow lanyards and a picture of Lisa breastfeeding our daughter on conference floor and I was like, this is everything. This is why I stick with this church like we're breastfeeding on the conference floor. We're wearing our rainbow lanyard. We're being lesbian parents and that, you know, fighting the deconstruction of terrible things And that got me through the pain and hurt.

Brittany Mangelson

Well, that makes me cry. Just I can't imagine what that feels like to essentially have a church. Be debating how debating your worst. Debating your value, debating your relationship, debating your family, debating your baby's, um, and to be sitting in the midst of people that have this. Well, we love you, but we're going to keep. We still want to keep you and your family at an arm's length on, then to have it. Touch your immediate family. Um, that's that's a lot to go through and remind me how long was conference. It was like a three day thing, right?

Lisa Meyer

I think the national conference part was three days. Okay, Don't World Conference was backed up to it. So like there was the International conference part that lasted until, I think Thursday and the, um, national coffers started like there's the afternoon or Friday morning with two more days.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, so food decision in a short amount of time. I mean, that's That's a lot of high emotion, That's and to have that happen right after a long World conference. I mean, I know how long those guess.

Lisa Meyer

Exhausting!

Erin Cavanaugh

And we worked the booth. Like I remember working the booth, you know, working the gala booth through that and that. It's such an experience, is trying to explain GALA to people from all over the world and of merge. And people are so excited to take your merchandise swag and trying to explain what your merchant swag is. And it was such an interesting experience trying explain GALA to church members from, you know, not our geographical area.

Brittany Mangelson

From countries all over the place. Wow.

Erin Cavanaugh

it was hoped to him in that. Like they were excited about the fact of the existing made no idea. Yeah. You ever had a space on the floor? Also, arguments. I many people come up to me and,

you know, uh, in the market was a world markets what's called right now and tell me that there's no reason that games should be on the floor, that we should not giving away flags, that that's an abomination. So you have these high points of hope and, like, I can't wait for this to happen where I live. I can't wait for there to be a place for me to have acceptance and, you know, in this place is that it's not on the table yet. And then expect people come and tell me that I'm going to Hell and I'm an abomination.

Lisa Meyer

And we got I mean, Aaron talked about the rainbow lanyards that we handed out, but we also had people say, Well, that's propaganda. And you shouldn't be like trying to sway people's votes by ending out rainbow lanyards. And it was just interesting. And how the world church people, you know, like the church appointees, shouldn't be wearing them because that means that they're trying to sway. It was it was intense,

Erin Cavanaugh

And I remember I didn't think about this until you just you're talking like that. I remember towards the end. Um, Lisa's mom got really concerned that our lives were in danger. I worry about a lanyards, and so she made us promise not to walk on the street tour car. We had to go through this. She moves from steak the tunnel because she was scared because there was protesters outside, holding their signs and saying terrible sayings. And she was scared for us toe to take the street outside. There was once Protester broke into the conference chamber and started screaming things from the balcony. I'm here to be removed and towards the end

Lisa Meyer

And Westboro Baptist Church was there with their horrible signs. And

Erin Cavanaugh

We didn't bring our our kids to conference National Conference towards the last day because I was scared for their safety.

Brittany Mangelson

Wow, Wow, That's and again, that's something that I think a lot of straight people that were there were probably, you know, recognized that there were protesters and, um, other denominations that were there and people in our own denomination that were super grumpy about it. But the safety aspect is something that's particularly on the LGBT persons mind. They're at the forefront, So that's I just want to acknowledge that's a lot, a lot of emotion to go through in just a short amount of time. So, yeah, that's waas. So I mean spoiler alert, while I guess Lisa already said, but the vote was overwhelmingly in support of LGBT for marriage and ordination. So from there, what happened with you, too in your congregational life. I mean, you know, I wanna, like, get into what you're doing now and that kind of thing, but just walk us through that part of your story.

Erin Cavanaugh

So one of the first things I'm a little bit stubborn, and I told me so that I wouldn't marry her unless it was legal in my church or my state. And so you're getting a lot of time, But I'm like I am doing this unless it's recognized somewhere. So as soon as as soon as that pass, I'm like, I guess we can set a date. And so we started planning her wedding. That was that was a big thing. So it wasn't legal in our state, but

Lisa Meyer

it was what they called a covenant commitment ceremony at that point from the church's perspective.

Erin Cavanaugh

And so we planned our reading. Um, and I really didn't. The oldest historic courthouse in the state of Michigan is in our county. So we did a religious ceremony that was not legally recognized and historical house. It was nothing but fantastic and contrary. And it was it was amazing. And that was that was really cool. Um, Leeson, I, um, had ordinations processed for us. I was not a minister. Lisa began the process of getting her card back. Um, currently, both Lisa and I are in the office of Elder. So that was we were blue Ministry in a way that we never done it before. And that was huge. I remembered a one point crying I had done, um, an intensive ministry training that they did in our state before this had happened. It was like three years, and it wasn't like needs or seminary, But it was like a step down from that, um, and I would go three times a year and read these books that were, like college of all books and study. And at one of them, we have not got a me out where we were serving, you know, bread and grape juice to each other. And I moved sobbing during that because I thought, this is the closest I'll ever get. So serving communion and I was ordained, and I really served communion to somebody. And I sobbed through it cause I never thought that was something my church would let me dio, even though I felt that call it in my soul. So incredibly strongly. So those things those those callings and those emotions, those things happened.

Lisa Meyer

Being able to baptize our daughter. Our list, that was That was a really cool experience.

Erin Cavanaugh

Yeah, and she's like, I don't know what to do, mom, I have two moms! I have two moms. How do I choose? Is gonna baptize may eso way have a picture hanging in our congregation of Lisa and I walking her out together in the water. One of us baptized her and the other helped hold her. And it made dreams come possible that I didn't think would ever happen.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah. So now, Lisa, you are the pastor of the congregation, is it the congregation that you first came to when you and Erin got together? The little rural church? Or is it a different church?

Lisa Meyer

The country church.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, talk about that!

Lisa Meyer

I am the pastor and Otter Lake and Erin has taken her turn as well, we've swapped back and forth. But it's been an amazing experience because that healing variation has become a welcoming congregation of the healing congregation for lots of LGBTQ people and other people who have been disenfranchised by the variations they attended. So It's really better need experience. We run all kinds of programming, even people who don't regularly attend our aren't members like official members. It's It's neat to see people realize that there's somewhere in our community that is accepting about to be teaching people they may never come. They may never walk through the doors or even know where we're at. But to know that we exist makes a difference to them. Um, some of the stuff we've been doing with Pride brought in, brought us into connection with other people who are not necessarily churchy type people. But they've really been interested in seeing you know what we do and how we running. We've had community nights that we've do monthly where we do different activities are one coming up is a pancakes and PJ, so we have a pajama breakfast bar and are inviting anybody who wants to come in and we've had gosh, we have on a Sunday we have between 10 and 20 people, so not a huge Sunday congregation. But probably over the past year, we've had 100 150 people who just come in and out to different things and come to this piece or that piece or, you know, call us about for

Erin Cavanaugh

and it's there's something profound, like there's ministry that literally happens and just saying, Yeah, my wife, the pastor, like in that statement, there's people that are like Wait, what we and it makes ministry happen outside of the four walls of the church, which is something that we embrace so strongly and any leadership in any ministry that we dio because church can't just happen in the four walls and literally, we just have so many amazing experiences happen in a bar. We were doing an LGBT social event, and it was this pizza slash brewery and we were there and I had somebody asked me to marry them. We had to people who asked about attending our church. Um, we shared about some of the ministry that we were doing, and just it allows those things to happen. And it's been so cool.

Lisa Meyer

And that wasn't even churchy for say, it just happens. God brings God, bring situations that just happened. And they're amazing to watch.

Erin Cavanaugh

And I'm always guarded even in those situations, because I don't want Teoh push religion on somebody like I'm over cautious because I know the damage that you know churches have done to the queer community. So, like it's really hard on some of that. I am looking for something and I'm like, Did I say something? I don't over stop And so it's hard for me to even come out of my shell and and do that. That's sort of like sharing, and so I have to really get pushed. But it's been coo to see that happen.

Lisa Meyer

And I think there's so much need in the LGBTQ community for for community, Um, whether or not that community isn't a religious, you know, vein or not, I think it's important for them to feel that, and oftentimes they're looking for something greater, like something spiritual, even if they're not any Christianity is too scary at the point that most people we need are at like Christianity is too scary. They've had too many bad experiences with churches, but the ability to come in and know that they're gonna be accepted for who they are and know that they don't have to believe a certain way to be there and know the roof isn't gonna cave in when they walk through the door. You know, just those experience are powerful for people, whether or not like I said, they ever become full fledged card carrying members, you know that they're able t know that there's people out there here for them.

Erin Cavanaugh

It's our churches on the main highway out of the country where it's at. And so we have taken the opportunity of on our bulletin, like Are what is it called the big marquee or whatever?

Lisa Meyer

Yeah the sign marquee

Erin Cavanaugh

Outside, we have two rainbow flags on it and, um, it's I don't know how many people see that, and it means something to it. But I know that at least one person saw it and felt the need to stop and put a little passive aggressive note on her door. So I'm like, if I made somebody mad that they need to take the little notebook out and tell me all things and all the scriptures, that means that I have inspired like, six people, like I'm gonna count this like both ways, so it gives us hope that were by even just having a rainbow flag on our our sign.

Lisa Meyer

We've put messages up like Happy Pride Month. The more God Loves Everyone, you know, just and more more details, kinds of things. But I think have really made a difference that people have said, Oh, you're that church! I don't know if being "that church" is a good thing or a bad thing, but okay with being "that church".

Erin Cavanaugh

and we have a huge sign. It's like 2.5 feet by but in the half are welcoming statement. When you come in, it's right next to the bathroom on the government S p. So you're gonna go by it, people inclusive bathroom. And it's right next to everybody's welcome regardless of anything. So we try to have in every aspect of our congregation people knowing that they're safe and we're trying to do like trauma Informed Ministry. I think being LGBT makes you have to do that because you're aware of how much trauma LGBT folks of experience at the hand of quote unquote Christians.

Brittany Mangelson

I think that you raise several really good points on it. It reminded me a little bit of the ministry that we do here. It's not Lake. We have people who I assume will never step into our church, but they sure tell all their friends about our church. We've created a reputation for ourselves, and people know that if they have friend that wants a community, they will tag a member of the pastorate team. They'll tag myself or they'll get us in touch with people. And it's It's just really interesting to see because sometimes you know for myself I can look at our congregation and we, I mean fluctuate anywhere between 20 and 100 people, and you just never know what it's gonna be. And so on the lighter day, it can feel frustrating because, you know, you've put all this work into a service or whatever it may be. But just knowing that we have a reputation in the neighborhood, you've made some people upset, Um, are rainbow flag has not always flown because of the hands of other people. Ah, and and the fact that we are doing that and the fact that people know that we are a safe place reminds me on those days when our numbers are small, that we're still making an impact, and we've created a reputation for ourselves among the whole state of Utah, pretty much on people know and will connect us two people that are seeking. So it sounds like that. That's kind of a similar thing, where people just know your existence, know that you're there, and that brings a sense of a surety. If they need a community, they know this place is safe, which I think is really significant for the LGBT Q community, because for decades your communities had to go underground. And so you know, thirds there's been such a a collective coming out into just regular old society exactly how it should be. Ah, and so I just really appreciate that they're in the middle of a little town Michigan. You know that there can be a little church off the highway that is loud and proud about being inclusive,

Lisa Meyer

And it's really need to because we are pulling people in a part of the reason I think we sometimes don't have as many people that are something services is because we have people who are driving sometimes an hour, over an hour to get to our congregation, and they don't always have the time where the ability or I mean you have kids, you understand getting kids ready and getting them to places. But that there's were still there took home, even though, you know, they might not be able to make it every Sunday, or even, maybe most Sundays. But they know that were there and they reach out, they need us and reach out when we need that. So,

Erin Cavanaugh

Yeah, I think it's important to talk about to the fact that, um, poverty's a real thing that our community faces especially, um, our Trans brothers and sisters. And sometimes they don't have the transportation to get out toe tar, tiny church out, you know, the middle of nowhere. And so that's something we have to be aware of when where I was trying to fight to. So how do we help people get transportation? How do we help people when they're not able to meet their basic needs? And that's something that's that's been profound, what we've been able to a couple of times reach out through the funds of the church and help people literally, you know, meet basic needs that they couldn't otherwise do. Even though we can't make it to church on Sundays, they know that we're able to help them have safety and those things.

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, some people we've been able to transport. We have someone right now that we pick up from adult foster care home that we transport people in the variation do. And we've also been able to help people with Gas money and I kind of think to help them get to a place that that's safe.

Erin Cavanaugh

We have someone who was volunteering to help somebody get to hormone therapy, just all sorts of things that are real barriers and sometimes ministry isn't about service. It's it's showing up on helplessly get to their doctor's appointment.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, and I think that that is one important thing to raise when we're talking as ministers, because a lot of times we define success with people in pews, and that's not what it is all. If we can get somebody to a doctor's appointment, if we can get somebody to their job, if we can help somebody with the job interview. Sometimes these basic needs are so much more important then, where there physical body is on the Sunday morning.

Lisa Meyer

Right and we're able to minister to them in more concrete ways in their lives than just talking about Jesus on Sunday morning. Yeah,

Erin Cavanaugh

I hope that speaks to what? You wanted this podcast to be about about the real ness. And I think because we show up in real ways and other places, people come to us sometimes in and ministry with the messiness of life. And it's I'm in this relationship. I don't know how God's gonna accept me when I'm not, you know, in a married, committed relationship, how do I find a place for me and church when I'm dating and maybe have had sex outside of marriage. And we get to have real conversations that help people real issues because we're showing a real everywhere.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, well, that's exactly you know, when I think of the catchphrase in Community Christ, Christ Mission, Our Mission. I mean, that's what it is. Christ wasn't necessarily building churches and putting people in pews. He would have been taking people to their doctor's appointments, and he would have been reassuring them that they had worth and that their relationship was worthy and good and all the things that you've been talking about. I mean, that's where the hands and feet of Jesus really comes to life. So good stuff. So I'm I am curious a little bit since you've had such a roller coaster with the Michigan area, how has I mean both of you have been pastor of your congregation? So how has that been accepted by the larger mission center?

Lisa Meyer

I feel like we've been really, really accepted by the Mission Center leadership particularly in the last probably 4-5 years. Um, but originally, like when we were attending the other

congregation, we sat down with Mission Center Leadership and asked them, You know, where where can we go? That's more accepting and they're basically, like, nowhere like this is your option. And so it's like it's been an ongoing struggle in an evolutionary. Are those thing to be where we're at now, but I think that some of our current leadership is very supportive. In fact, I know that they are on, and they've been really helpful in helping us do ministry to bring other congregations along. Uh, asked for other congregations. They've not always welcomed us play. As much as I would like to see. We, I think we're well known. I know that at least.

Lisa Meyer
We're notorious!

Lisa Meyer
Notorious! That's probably a better word. Um and they know if we come in that we're not gonna come in, um, gentle and hiding who dispelling that status quo. That's not that's not what we're here to do. So we don't have the conversations anymore.

Erin Cavanaugh
Um, there was a time or people have the conversations like, Do you have to flaunt it to show it? And I'm like, I don't know if it's wanted to hold my wife's hand. Um, because I don't feel like it's launching it When my cis friends hold their spouses hands and and those things have stopped, we don't hear those as much anymore. I wish everybody in podcast land could see your face when I said that outloud. Oh, because that was the best. You were like, "excuse me to say what?", but yeah, and we do still get those from other people, but we don't hear that in the church anymore. I think we've gotten to the place where people no better than to sometimes say those things to us because we are a fierce advocate, Um, and will stand up and people know they can call us. And we're gonna help advocate for you if you need it, and we're gonna help advocate for the community and just for for social justice. In general, no matter what it is, will stand up and fight that, um, you've had congregations and, you know, the far north invite us to do a to teach workshops, um, northern Michigan or conservative. So people that don't know Michigan there's also congregations in the city. Invite us to do them. And so that's been reassuring to be able to hold workshops to have people come to be invited to do leadership at youth camps now and to be in a room as camp staff. That's that's huge. And that's something that never would have happened before. Like No, you like girls. You can't staff in your camp. Um, and people were like, No, that's dumb. You're welcome staff our camps now. And so you just see these shifts happening that are so incredibly cool, in fact, that I can do prayer, at mission center conference that I could serve. I was just elected to a board for one of our campgrounds, and so, like, we're showing up in ministry again in a larger area. And sometimes it's hard to know how to handle that, because for so long, I was when you've had trauma happened to you become gaurded and become hypervigilant. We look over your shoulder and for so long before the resolution passing, even in the implementation of it, there was that garden to protect ourselves. And I feel like it's starting different down, and I'm starting to feel safe again.

Lisa Meyer

I mean, there were definitely meetings in our mission center, even after National Conference, where they basically said, because the the policy was first, I don't think that that many people realize that the policy was put out in kind of a trial basis. And, uh, there were a lot of people in Michigan who are like, Well, when it fails, you know, we'll go back to the way it used to be kind of thing. And that was really interesting to hear that, because I have nobody knew that it was trial. Um, and I don't know that anyone anticipated that it would continue to be trial, But obviously there were people in Michigan who were holding on to it because we went to missions in our meetings and carnation group meetings, where they're like, well, you know, after they realized this isn't gonna work then we'll go back to. And I think I don't know that you know that that's that's really not how I anticipate this is gonna play out.

Brittany Mangelson

Wow. Yeah, my face is made some some faces as he's who have been talking because, I mean, I cannot understand why someone would think that there comment or saying like, Well, when this fails, or do you have to hold your wife's hand? I mean, you two are committed. You have three children together. You have very intentionally had those three children with more intention than a lot of straight couples have when they have kids. And

Erin Cavanaugh

there's there's people really felt like that, we're shoving our agenda, quote unquote in their face by like, existing and like being affectionate. And I don't think they understand all the components of being affectionate, like like it is scary sometimes, like lodgings. I don't have to think about, and I can just hold leases hand cause I'm off when I just wanted, you know, show that. But there's also times that you think about all of the components and likely society. When we first moved to we're living now it's a rural area and we had neighbor, uh, call my phone and and multiple times threatened physical and sexual violence to me, Lisa and Kennedy, which is baby, and some things that go through a hat like that makes it scary to even show up and, you know, be ourselves in any place. And the only people realize that, like those are the things you carry with you when you're queer with you all the time.

Lisa Meyer

Waking up in the morning and wondering if there's gonna be like a cross on your lawn, burning like those kinds of things happen still, and they happen to people like us still, and it's it's concerning, like we had an alarm system. We have dogs, we got an extra dog. We have three dogs now. You know, dogs that are protective and but anything we can do to protect ourselves. We're also anti gun pretty much for the most part, so we don't want to go down that route, but having having some kind of protection can be before guns.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, and I think that that is, that's That's a message that people need to hear. I think that the world that we have created is still hostile and no matter how much progress we can pat ourselves on the back for, they're still microaggressions and then just outright threats that are a regular part of an LGBTQ person's daily existence. So I'm really, really sorry that that is the reality, but it is important to talk about.

Erin Cavanaugh

Yeah, I think a lot of people don't understand microaggressions. Um, and that would be an amazing thing to see a future podcast on, because I think people don't even know what that term is when you don't live in a minority group or understand what it's like to live that all day.

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, the whole I was just joking around well, but But it wasn't, though it wasn't a joke because there was something serious in that. There's always a piece of seriousness and every kind of joke with that.

Erin Cavanaugh

Or you can only get stung so many times before it's it's a big deal

Lisa Meyer

And you put up your walls quicker and it takes more work to get those well down like their times. And I'm like, I just can't leave the house today like I know this is a safe place and I need you here. I can't be out in the world today. It's happen often, but they it does happen. Yeah.

Brittany Mangelson

Uh, well, and with this conversation, I guess this is where it's good to bring up representation and visibility, but also with the understanding that it's obviously really, really complex. So the fact that you two have both been pastors, you're both elders in Community of Christ. Can you talk from your perspective of why it's important for the LGBTQ community to have visibility to for teens and kids to be able to see people like them in leadership positions? Uh, to working moms, you have a family. I mean, what impact do you think that that has kids? And what would that have meant to you when you were growing up?

Lisa Meyer

I mean, it gets super important, and I'm going to use an example of our oldest daughter going to kindergarten. We were stressed, really, really stressed because we live in a very conservative community and we didn't know how she would be taken. We didn't know how you know other parents would treat her or, you know, if she would be able to have friends and be very, um, coherently and decided Teoh make ourselves a presence in the classroom and make ourselves a presence with the teachers. And, you know, and now I mean, I think probably everyone in the school knows that our kids have two moms and they're kind of jealous, jealous that our kids have two Mommas and they don't.

Erin Cavanaugh

This is my favorite story. One of our children's really good friends, her mom was telling me that she, um she came downstairs, she had been laying under her blanket, fallen asleep on the couch and her daughter came downstairs, sobbing. I don't know where my mom is. It's not fair! Addie he has two moms and I can't even find my one. And so it's like it is. It's literally like it's not fair. You get two and I get one mom, So yeah, it's it's really cool in the school is super safe and welcoming, and it's it's we're still always on guard and we do extra work of with

me volunteer of the school, and we did from the get go, like we would volunteer on the parent committees. Um, we run Girl Scouts because I wanted to make sure that we were there to be able to be that leadership and make sure there was safety. Um, and I know that through that representation, I think representation happens at church and outside of trips, It's okay. I'm talking about both. It means it's real for other people. Um, when I had somebody who had recently moved to the county and they were asking about getting married and so they're like, Well, where can I go like, Is the clerk going to give me a hard time? What do I need to watch for? How do we keep myself safe and were able to mentor through that process? Lisa and I were the first couple to do a second parent adoption in our county. So even though we intentionally had our girls, I had no legal rights to them. They were born and didn't until our marriage had been legally recognized for a year. And then we had to spend thousands of dollars and go through all these paperworks and all these hoops so that I could really second parent all three of my girls.

Lisa Meyer

Have a visit from a court, a home study visit to make sure their house was safe. what's safe.

Lisa Meyer

I had to have a doctor certified that I wasn't dying of anything, just so I could legally adopt my girls. But then, at the school, I could legally signed paperwork that was huge. I could take my kid to the doctor if she was sick instead of having to make sure Lisa was home to take them. Because I don't have legal rights and I can't sign for an antibiotic.

Lisa Meyer

Or if anything ever happened to me, God forbid, that we would you know that you would not get them like why would they not stay with their other parent?

Erin Cavanaugh

So it offers security to other couples, I think, that this is really misses something that can happen. I know one of our really good friends that's a gay male couple that one of the youth that came to their wedding. She'll share that she sobbed through it because that meant that she could get married. And it was, it was the first time she saw a same sex couple get married and how profound that was like it's not just something you see on. You know I'm Ellen or, you know, whatever this is realize and like, real life messy.

Lisa Meyer

And I think, too it was like there were there was a friend of ours that came to our wedding. Um, and it was the first wedding she brought her daughter to. And her daughter came home and was having you know her to girl vows like, marry each other. And she's like, That was just so neat to see that if if that's something that she wants to do in the future, she knows that that's really that that happens. Um so representation definitely matters. It's an important thing to know.

Erin Cavanaugh

I think it makes kids think about things in all all areas. So, like, yeah, the kids in my my daughter's friends groups think about LGBT issues and how this is important for Kennedy's mom's to be safe. But then it goes the other things, too. So they think about how is this gonna, in fact, impact this this kid who might look different than me or have a different religion than me? So it just makes our kids and our communities more aware in lots of areas,

Lisa Meyer

Better people even hit people with disabilities like they're just more open. They understand they're better than kids were when I was young. I don't know. I appreciate it.

Erin Cavanaugh

And I guess we see that in our congregation to because we have, um, several people that are active in our congregation that that identifies eight. Yes, but they wanted to be connected to a spiritual home, like, which is confusing and convoluted, and they wanted to be connected to us. And so you make things available when you live outside of the box.

Lisa Meyer

And really, sometimes I think people just need to know that we're We're really just boring . We're not out there at clubs all the time doing all the crazy, you know, multiple partner, whatever. We're really just boring. Like we're two moms raising three kids going to school, going to church, doing all the things you know. Well, just were no more exciting than anyone else.

Lisa Meyer

Yep, just give us a naps and coffee, and

Lisa Meyer

We're not exotic, unusual and strange. I mean, we're kind of strange, but no different than anyone else.

Brittany Mangelson

It reminds me of there was a mean that went around for a while. It was like to gay talking about their gay life there like And then I had my gay coffee, and I read my gay newspapers and put on my gay slippers. And, you know, this is like, here I am living the homosexual life that's so threatening everybody else, like me and my gay slippers.

Erin Cavanaugh

I do take it down a fun path, right? I enjoy at this point, ridiculous stereotypes. And I have a life goal of owning Subaru one day

Brittany Mangelson

Ooooo They're great cars, so

Erin Cavanaugh

and they are stereotypically lesbian cars and I have hordes of Birkenstocks and plaid that I wear. Just to mess with people sometimes.

Brittany Mangelson

Perfect. Well, I have openly said that I just feel like lesbians have figured out the secret to the world. Like they've just cracked it. I mean, they just they just win all the things. So plaid shirts are great!

Erin Cavanaugh

I'm telling you, Birkenstocks are were it's at.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, they're very comfortable shoes. Uh, you know, I just I have to just state this because, as you were talking and how important it is to be represented, how much work that is on you! I mean, listening to all of the volunteering that you've done. I mean, I I am in a very privileged place because I don't feel like I need to be represented in my kids school. I mean, I guess that we are the only members of Community of Christ and probably one of the only non Mormons in the school. But I don't feel like I need to show up to prove that I'm just like everybody else. And so that representation. I just want to acknowledge that it's a lot of work and the fact that you feel like you need to be represented, because somehow your existence is still not the norm is kind of unfortunate that you have to do more work to just prove that your family is worth the family next door, you know, am I making sense like it? It's frustrating.

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, and it's rewarding to though like there. It would be nice to not have to put all that in, but it was also kind of nice to walk on the hallway this morning after talking to your kids teacher for you know, about a thing and and have they probably I don't know, 15 kids in the school just come up to hug and be like, Oh, you're here today you know, people that we don't our friend, our kids, friends with some some people that weren't even our kids, friends that just know who we are and know that we're safe And, uh, that's that's me, too. Yeah, so putting in the work is rewarding too.

Erin Cavanaugh

Yes, but also I think it's hard to, though, because then when we we mess up, I think it's happens for all parents though, I feel I feel that load even harder. And there's been times that we have. Like I didn't think about doing last year, extra support to teachers about Father's Day. Um, because we've had a couple teachers that have been so good at dealing with holidays that our kids don't fit. You know, norm of. On the last year we had come home three Father's Day projects for my middle daughter, where one father was just white it out and Uncle was written next to it and Sharpie big like Gap and then uncle thinks you didn't even right over the white it out part.

Lisa Meyer

The other one, she just had them spell father like one of those. What is the home of the cross sticks? Where they I down the side, and then they wrote something that described their father. Some she did that just said I did it for Uncle Eric, Mom.

Erin Cavanaugh

I'm like, Do you feel like it's weird that you wrote Father for your Uncle Eric? Maybe we could have wrote uncle. She's like, Yeah, I was weird of me, it made me sad and like we had to talk about it. So now we have a recurring reminder in our calendar every year, two weeks before Father's Day to go talk to the teachers so we can give them support like this. How do you get through Father's Day? You know,

Lisa Meyer

Or family trees, the pre-done family trees that have the spot for the father and e mean it just makes her kids feel different. And that's that's a struggle sometimes to, and I think our oldest is starting to kind of like take it on as a personal challenge. So she's just taking on the advocacy role. But our middle is still still young and shy and working that out, so it's it's tricky and they shouldn't have to,

Brittany Mangelson

No. Yeah. And at this point, how old are your girls?

Lisa Meyer

10, 7 and 4.

Brittany Mangelson

Nice! Fun ages

Brittany Mangelson

Kindergarten. Next year, we'll have our youngest in kindergarten and all three will be in school.

Lisa Meyer

Yeah, the oldest goes to middle school, which is a totally new experience, like we have. You don't have connections of the middle school yet, so we're gonna have to work to make those connections.

Erin Cavanaugh

It's been incredible to have a church congregations a family, though that holds us when we have these things and they'll be sad with us, will be angry with us. When we had the those calls that happened and I was I was beside myself. They did. they literally human, prayed with me and would be with us like anytime we needed. I could call them and they would be there. And that's been huge. To not have to fight it by ourselves.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah,

Erin Cavanaugh

So have somebody to celebrate the good, they're there in the good and the bad, and that's what church and families about.

Brittany Mangelson

So I guess one of my last questions and I like to just say, is there anything else that you didn't get to say, but first, before we get to that, I'm curious to hear what your hopes are for the church and by the church. I mean Community of Christ, where you see there's room for growth, that kind of thing. What are your thoughts on the future of Community of Christ?

Lisa Meyer

Um, I think that there's a lot of growth we done in hard negations. Um, it's hard when someone reaches out to me and says, You know, I'm looking for a safe space in my community, and I I can't just say Community Christ is. Because it isn't always. Sometimes it's more harmful than good and bringing someone from the other particular community into a recreational space. The last thing you want is to bring them into a space, not accept them because they've already had so many spaces I haven't accepted them it, I mean, it really not be dramatic that it could be fatal like it can. It can really cause trouble for people who are rejected again. And so it would be nice, really nice if I could say to Someone on the other side of the state was looking for a church. You can go to Community of Christ and it will be safe. That's where I'd like to be in future.

Erin Cavanaugh

I agree with that and I'd like to see, I see more representation happening. I see gay and lesbian people and leadership at different levels. But I still don't see gender, non conforming individuals, non binary individuals, trans folk. I don't I don't see all members of our community being represented. I see white gay and lesbians being represented, and we need that would be what I would hope for. The future is seen the full diversity of our community being uplifted into leadership in in other ways.

Brittany Mangelson

That's a really, really important goal to have, and I hope that we're getting there. I hope that as we allow our young folks to be who they are, unapologetically, that that will start happening because I know that I know of several trans folks and non binary folks in the church and they bring brilliant ministry. And so I hope that that as time goes on and I don't mean that in like long term goal, I mean soon, I hope that we can start seeing more representation at different levels. of leadership because it's really important. And, like we talked about the representation and just the visibility of being able to see somebody like yourself is really, really important, especially for the most marginalized groups.

Erin Cavanaugh

Thank you so much for having us on, Brittany.

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah? Is there anything else that you'd like to say that you weren't able to?

Lisa Meyer

I can't really think of anything brilliant.

Brittany Mangelson

I mean, it doesn't need to be brilliant.

Lisa Meyer

I'd love to have a very articular closing comment, but I don't know that I do.

Erin Cavanaugh

No, but there's there's always more to be said and there's always more to be more to learn. And I think just keep that, you know, inquisitive nature about yourself and keep seeking to find out more information. And don't be scared that you're gonna have the right answer because you're gonna have the wrong answer because things change and we mess up and I can tell a lot stories where I've messed up and so just just boldly, you know, try to learn and mess up and do better every day.

Lisa Meyer

And I guess ultimately, I did think of something kind of articulate, just t never be certain that you have it right. It really just good life advice because there's always so much more to learn. And there's always so much more to to change your mind. And God didn't give us brains so that we could close them and never taken any new input. There's constantly new input to learn and make it a priority to learn from people different than you make a priority to be that person who says, "I'm the one who wants the lunch with the five" like that, that's important. It's important that you you take the opportunity to learn because you're not always right. I'm not even always right, Whoa!

Brittany Mangelson

Yeah, it's a hard, hard pill to swallow. Also, the looks you two are giving each other. It's giving me life. You are true spouses, it's great! Alright, well, I am so glad that we were able to make this work. I'm really glad that we have this conversation.

Erin Cavanaugh

Me too. Thank you so much, Brittany.

Josh Mangelson

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