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Project Zion Podcast

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

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Hello everyone, welcome to another episode of the Project Zion Podcast. This is Brittany Mangelson and I am bringing you another edition of our No Filter series, which is where we talk about faith and gender and sex and sexuality. And today I'm really excited for our guests we have on Eliza Horning and I have wanted to have Eliza on gosh I almost should not admit this but probably since 2016, or maybe even beyond that. I have just been very intrigued by not only Eliza as a person, but Eliza's story and we are good friends. And so I'm just really glad that we are finally sitting down and recording this episode. So, Eliza, why don't you give us a quick introduction to who you are, and just anything that you would include in an elevator pitch if you are meeting someone for the first time?

Eliza Horning 1:33

For sure, Thanks, Brittany. So, my name is Eliza Horning. As I stated, I'm a young person in her 20s, who is grown up in Community of Christ, and very much still feels quite connected to the church as I've continued to grow. I grew up mostly in Independence, Missouri, where I am actually currently waiting out this global pandemic with my family but generally speaking I currently live in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. I'm a geek and a nerd, especially for TV, movies, Eurovision and superheroes. I also though treasure deeply my faith, and the connection I find with God, the deeper connection I find others through said faith as well. I also not entirely separately, from what I just said, I'm a trans woman, and bisexual.

Brittany Mangelson 2:32

Awesome. And I am really excited to see where this conversation goes. We've been in communication, a little bit about it. And I think that we are going to cover some really interesting territory. And yes, we are recording this in the myths of the global pandemic. And so we're going to be talking a little bit more about that in relation to this topic. So, Eliza, let's just dive right in. And why don't you tell us a little bit about growing up, growing up in Community of Christ?

Unknown Speaker 3:06

For sure. So as I said, I grew up in Community of Christ. My parents are both Community of Christ, my dad, even working for Community of Christ since around the time I was born actually, and still is. I have since I remember, while living with my parents always attended church. I remember living in Tahiti with my family for a while when I was much younger, and going to church often, whether it be Sunday services or children and family camps. I remember spending so much time so much time that I would cherish together with friends and family, at church or church events. Even upon moving to the states or or the US. This would continue for a large

part. I would continue to attend, attend church weekly, my family and I would often go to other church events like children youth camp. Mission Center's youth rally, they would organize and things at a larger jurisdictional level like Spectacular and IYF. I'd also spend time frequently at the temple and the auditorium going to my dad at his office or offices, different, different points, different offices that he would have there and going to other events and worships there as well. So, church has definitely been a large part of my life. For sure, yeah. So I mean, and I think growing up, I mean, that was kind of the, the, the main narrative, the prevailing narrative of my life was church. It was Community of Christ. My parents, for several at least a couple generations on both sides. Were coming to Christ. To our and I I did as i say i mean i i grew up at least for quite some time really truly genuinely enjoying it. I was I mean especially for my dad when he was one teaching classes or giving sermons though I may have been a bit biased would would love the the Bible classes or the exegesis that would be trying to be you know in the sermon or are especially when my dad is preaching certainly you know, the personal story is that he would inject into his sermons. I I look back over that time in my life and And generally speaking, they certainly up to a point which I'll talk more about in a bit. I look back over it positively. It was a good time. I enjoy going to church as I was saying I enjoyed know the Bible and learning about it and and and other scriptures and learning about them as well. And just even to some extent, now just learning about who we were who, who we're trying to be as the people around me, the fellow Christians that I knew personally, and the fellow Community of Christ, people I knew personally, you know, who we were as a community.

Brittany Mangelson 6:18

Yeah, so it was, it sounds like it was a huge part of your life and your identity and your family's identity. And I'm assuming that your Sunday's were very busy. I am curious, did you attend the Wednesday night prayer meetings? I always hear people talk about them and I've never really experienced one.

Eliza Horning 6:43

So yes, we we did. We didn't attend them with with painstaking regularity, but, but we did especially for some periods. Kind of almost an on off sort of thing. But there would be times where we would. They're very much. I mean, I'm sure they were different in every congregation or jurisdiction. But, but even I would say within the congregation that I attend, or attended more so that it was it was a little bit of a different dynamic, and perhaps just by nature of what the endeavor at hand was, but it was interesting just because of the fact that it was such a different dynamic in some ways, then Sunday morning worship. But yeah, it was, I mean, even those prayer surfaces is is interesting because of how intentional I was, you know, you go on a Wednesday evening away from school and, and certainly for school, school for me and trying to escape everything. And you're trying to go into this very intentional space. Sometimes even perhaps, especially speaking for my younger self, unwillingly known dragged by the parents and may have felt some time. But you can't help but feel in now be turned, turned upside down into this intentional space of trying to be in a prayerful setting. Yeah, they were interesting.

Brittany Mangelson 8:19

Yeah, thanks for those thoughts. I'm just always curious. Like I said, I've never really experienced one. I did go. And this is kind of going down a rabbit hole. But I did attend a we're reunion and Nauvoo. And we had a couple of early morning gatherings and somebody made the comment that they felt like an old timer prayer service. And I thought, oh, I've always wanted to attend one. I felt like maybe kind of sort of that that happened. But yeah, thanks for thanks for sharing those thoughts.

Eliza Horning 8:52

Concurrently, though, particularly during my time in middle school, and then in high school, I became more and more aware of Of what felt like. What I would describe as an incongress dissonant feeling, surrounding what I was understanding and perceiving as what and whom I was meant to be the roles and behaviors, I was to assume for the gender I had been previously assigned a gender that by each passing day felt more and more at odds, who I was understanding and discerning myself to be.

Brittany Mangelson 9:32

I think that it's really poignant that this self discovery and self awareness was happening as you are in middle school and high school, when you're vulnerable, you're growing into yourself, and it's the assumption that you are going to grow into this person that everyone has assumed you to be. And so when you yourself are realizing that you are a different person. I just want to acknowledge that's, that's really significant. And I'm sure at times felt very lonely and just confusing and difficult. Because as we all know, I mean, being a youth being a teenager is rough in and of itself, even if you are comfortable with the gender that you are assigned. So I just want to acknowledge that what you just said was very significant and very challenging.

Unknown Speaker 10:26

So I guess for the purposes of giving a brief sketch the moment at least, I'll skip ahead a little. Eventually, after a rough end of my time in High School, graduating, moving to Canada, and attempted University at what became clear was the wrong time, and then moving to another different city. I came out to everyone on my Facebook began more fully trying to implement a social transition for myself. This was in July of 2017.

Brittany Mangelson 11:06

So Elijah, you said that that happened that you officially came out on Facebook, which again, is a really significant big move. So you said that that was July of 2017. I'm just wondering what kind of community support were you able to get? Did you feel like at least your Facebook community, your friends and family there? Were they overall supportive?

Eliza Horning 11:28

Yeah, so I think in my experience, in my experience in a variety of ways, but certainly in my experience, directly after coming out on Facebook, my experience has often been positive to ambivalent, I guess I'd say, I haven't gotten many. I haven't gotten many in general, but certainly not even by people. I know. It may or many negative distinctly categorically negative responses to myself.

I think there have been some people that I was Facebook friends with, for example, though, and this is what I would categorize in some ways to, you know, well, maybe ambivalence isn't even the right word. Or I suppose, I guess distinction I would make is that it's the reaction directly directed towards me would be ambivalence. So, like I've had some people who were keyword there on my Facebook feed, who never really reacted per se to coming out or me being trans in any way, shape or form. However, due to the way that transness being trans in general, is often innately politicized, especially in Well, I suppose all over the world. Some of these people in question I would still see posting violent, vitriolic, anti trans memes and things of that nature. So as I say, keyword, they were on my Facebook feed. So, I mean, I got I've gotten, in a way indirectly responses like that. And then I've gotten things in person where people just have become stone faced and don't really give you a reaction, the time of day of any sort to really but don't say anything directly, specifically negative. So, I mean, I've gotten a lot of those type of reactions, and but uh, But on Facebook, so, you know, directly after coming out on Facebook, I mean, not just resulted in not everybody commenting or reacting, for example. But as I say, people that did, but it did comment or react. were love reacting, I suppose or, you know, certainly sending positive and nice and helpful supportive comments.

Brittany Mangelson 14:26

Yeah, thanks for that. I think that sometimes we see these big moments on Facebook or wherever they land and we don't necessarily think of the reaction and the just the weight of significance that it has in a person's life and that it can kind of either make or break relationships. And yeah, it's just again, a very significant big bold move. So I was just curious to know, overall how it was for you. So thanks for sharing that.

Eliza Horning 15:00

Since then, though I've been, I've been living in Guelph Ontario now trying to work, maintain my mental, emotional, and physical well being. And otherwise, just establishing more roots, trying to just eke out my best life all more independently at the same time. However, since being away from home, for the most part, this hasn't included church as opposed to me, I'm still trying to figure out what it means to be a transgender Christian woman, relatively newly, independently living the thing on her own and I think part of the joy And part of the struggle the same time. So much of that what I've just said in that previous statement, being a transgender Christian woman, bisexual, transgender Christian woman as well, is that I've, I've found, there is no strict single way to be, well, any of those things, those aspects, let alone putting them all together in a single identity and how to be that person.

So when I grew up, and trenched in the church in Community of Christ, that life was simply life is the life I lead thanks to my parents. But as I spoke about earlier, I I also didn't find much reason to complain, so to speak. Why was pretty good. I actually enjoyed going to church so frequently and learning and being with others. But certainly, life was not perfect. Even though I generally had at least a few friends or certainly people I liked to see at church, even though it kept me occupied, and I would be interested, even though I did like studying scriptures in the church itself, especially through the way my dad would present things. I always loved the way

he taught and spoke. But to no fault of anyone's life had to get more complicated. As I grew and learned and explored the world around more, I would take information in and use it at times when I would reflect. I began to question the world more. I began as well to turn inwardly more during this time during this time in middle school, school and high school begin turning to an aunt of mine, engaging in frequent phone calls with her. Primarily, these would be deep personal calls, some of his going to late into the night discussing things that I at the time weren't there to talk to anyone, not even my parents about. It'd be in those conversations that would first talk to anyone about being bisexual, or that I was transgender, learning what both of those words even meant, and certainly what they meant for me. It would be in those conversations where I would first share what I consider that time to be my first same sex crush. And through all of that I felt alone. Well, aside from my aunt, I didn't feel like it could turn to my parents. And through this, I would be frequently at odds and questioning God. So I can turn to him. There were also mental health issues at play with me during this time, messing with me as well.

And certainly, I'd be almost remiss if I did not mention because that that, or the fact that upon reflection, certainly over the years, another factor that comes to mind from this time of struggle, what helped make it as tumultuous as it was, at least partly, but also the fact that I lived and went to school in Missouri, in the USA, of all places. Now, not to say the Missouri is the worst or anything. But let me say unequivocally that yes, some of the stereotypes at least are true and Missouri is generally speaking, rather well not a place one might choose to be, if one is worse growing into being a progressive leaning, pious, sexual, bisexual trans woman. I mean, there's the perfect storm of things perhaps. Growing up, there would be plenty of negative things that I would have directed towards me or simply absorb through the news or whatnot. The negative attitudes and behaviors of churches nearby and around the country. The awful exploitative attitudes and behaviors shown by a psychiatrist I tried receiving help from the students and others around me who just simply didn't understand why I would want I would want to wear makeup or would make other similar comments or simply just turned to shunning me national firm, and climate surrounding marriage equality. Even to an extent, the conversations at least surrounding the US National Conference, that Community of Christ would have some of these things, types of actions come from people I knew, friends or, or even fellow Community of Christ church members, people I knew or thought I knew or trusted or thought I could trust. Places like churches that were welcoming or said, All are welcome or anything close to the sort. But come to find out there may be at least a fine print, at least of some.

Brittany Mangelson 21:55

I think what you just said was is so important for people to hear, especially because we have welcoming songs and Community of Christ we say that all are welcome. We like to preach that God's love is boundless and God's grace is for all. And we like to say all these things, and yet, we often miss the mark. And I think that when you come from a place of privilege, and I'm now speaking for myself, I have missed the mark and others have as well, where intentions are not enough and singing the right songs is not enough and real harm can be done. We often call those micro aggressions or just being purely naive, not recognizing what our what our unclear,

how do I want to say this? How our intentions can actually be more harming because while they are good intentions, we have not done the work people with privilege people who hold the power so to speak if they haven't done the work to actually figure out what it means to be affirming we it's almost like a bait and switch you know we can we can make people think that all are welcome. And yet like you said, there's a fine print there and maybe not quite you or maybe you if you change this one thing about yourself or if you just don't talk about this one thing, or or or so I just I just want to say that I'm really glad that you brought that up because I know that when I first came to Community of Christ from where I had been, it just seemed like this magical land of equality and and we really are trying and it gives me hope to see leaders and members say, well, we're trying but we're not there yet. But I think that we need to continually challenge ourselves and look at ourselves in the mirror and have hard conversations with ourselves of how we can actually be more affirming without that fine print. So thank you for that.

Eliza Horning 24:22

I do think that that is that is a very important thing to me. I think that that that notion, you know, that notion that we can so easily almost, you know, slap onto our church signs outside and that notion that can be that can be so easily said. And yet, certainly internally it can you know, as someone in several marginalized communities at least. I mean, I know that it can, it can feel uncertain, and at the very least, you know, because kind of like some of the things you were saying and talking about touching upon. Sometimes it's, it's a question of, you know, microaggressions, you know, maybe, you know, the congregation is welcoming, but they haven't had the education. And of course, it's also a matter of another issue at hand is that, you know, oftentimes it's the, the minority or the token minority venue, then is having to take it upon themselves, sometimes in various situations in life to have to have to educate the the privileged masses around them. So maybe a situation like that, but but where the uncertainty comes into play, is that So many people will say statements like that say statements like, all are welcome, or anything of the sort. And, and so it's just hard to discern, especially, you know, at the front door, you know, like before having experienced, maybe before having no, really knowing or wanting to be able to experience having anything that lets you know that you can experience this for yourself. But, but who are you? How are you to know whether this is actually a welcoming congregation? Maybe they're not actually a welcoming congregation at all. Maybe they're, you know, horribly homophobic or by phobic or transphobic or anything of the sort or, or even other things. I mean, I'm white But I don't like I'd like to care about racial equity and other issues that surround and care about the others around me and the people in my life and just around me around the world as well. And I hope that other people, including in my faith community and in the congregation that I would want to surround myself with, would care about those as well.

So I think it's very important, especially in many of our conversations, at least, to be willing to talk in specifics. I, I think I might talk about this more later. But I think there's some really great theology put forward in Community of Christ. There's some of our Enduring Principles and through Mission Initiatives, talking about who we are, or at least who we aim to be, and are trying to be, who we hoped to be. I think about sometimes the notion of all are called and and

kind of the parallels that I see to what I've been saying about all are welcome and that sort of phrasing. I mean, I think about the world where that's not possible due to the, the, the current social, or socio political climate, in various places in the world. Think about the place in the world where that's not possible due to legal issues. And I think about the kingdom of God as I see it, at least. And I think about how To me, I yearn for a day where there are no boundaries, and we can be able to state all are called. And there be no in any place around the world one would hope. And I, it's a it's a goal, it's something to work towards, in a way. And, and it's something to work towards. I don't want to talk about other places as, as some. You know, I don't want to, I don't want to talk about other places around the world as if you know, the places I call home I have it all figured out either. But I yearn for a day where all are called can be free every jurisdiction in the world to mean all are called with no asterisks either no fine print, but something I can think about and consider and times.

Brittany Mangelson 30:13

Yeah, thanks for those thoughts. So keep going keep sharing your story.

Eliza Horning 30:22

So, I suppose looking back some more from the vantage point that I currently hold. I found myself wondering if I had or later felt I had had at some point, not now but but some point in between. If I had had if I believe that you'd had too much church through my growing up years, maybe that's why in more recent time, I haven't gravitated to are prioritized church as much, particularly even not Community of Christ church as much. However, in any case, something else that has changed. As I say, from this point, I do kind of want to make this clear. Having said some of the things I did earlier, is my relationship with my parents. I actually talked to them now. Yeah. So that's good. Though there has been needed growth from all of us, including them. I would certainly say at this point that they are both that I recognize them I see in them both great, caring, compassionate allies, to both myself and others. And not just great caring, compassionate allies, but wonderful loving parents that I deeply adore. Not to be too gushy about one's parents, but I am still in my 20s I still have a right to not be too gushy about my parents. But look at me being gushy about my parents anyway. Really, though, I do feel strongly that my life up to this point has been centered on growth. Not that I'm the only one like that either. Especially in this time I've been in recently. I feel as though I've been working hard and diligently the sort of question I brought up earlier. What does it mean to be a bisexual, transgender, Christian woman trying to live on our own so have been trying different things, trying sometimes it fields desperately trying, at all times to answer that question. Because as I also said earlier, what I do know with certainty is that there is no one certain way to live out any part or all of that question. It's taken some time to get to that point, but that is where I'm at, at this time.

Brittany Mangelson 33:34

Like, I think you said earlier, there are a lot of different identities that you need to work through individually and then you compile all of them together. And that's a lot. I mean, that's, that's more stuff than I've had to work through. And, and that's, that's where that privilege comes from my part and I and I just want to acknowledge that that's a lot to go through. And it's a lot

of conversations to have with yourself. It's a lot of envisioning what your life will look like. It's a lot of self exploration. It's just, it's a lot of really big questions that a lot of people don't have to take on themselves. So

Eliza Horning 34:21

I was, like, I recognize it's kind of off the record, so to speak, but, like I recognized, I mean, I recognized that I was by before I die, like that came first. And, and then later on, and that's why, again, this is a I mean, this isn't going to be in the final product, but like, I I, that's how I kind of phrased it kind of almost awkwardly when I was talking about that for same sex crush. Because, I mean, it's a crush because it's boy and I mean, being a girl that would be the same sex crush and white but but that came first. That was those two First recognition and realization that well, something was different about me. And then there's something that would be maybe different about me. So,

Brittany Mangelson 35:08

Yeah, a lot of layers. .

Eliza Horning 35:11

And it doesn't all you know, it's not like some grand epiphany, that knowledge just kind of clicks together. Suddenly, that's not. Life doesn't tend to operate that way. In my experience, at least, no, no, sometimes with some things, but one of those big things at least it doesn't actually operate in those big somehow or stops groundbreaking epiphanies.

Brittany Mangelson 35:34

Yeah. What have you been doing to help you answer all of these questions and all of these big this this big puzzle that is Eliza and all these different pieces that go together? How have you been able to work through some of that?

Eliza Horning 35:52

Yeah, certainly. So especially when it comes to, speaking of the puzzle trying to see how some of those pieces of who I am work in tandem with that specific piece of being Christian, something I still strongly to this day believe that that is a part of who I am. Even though for example, I not regularly attended church for a while. So in saying that though I, I have been trying different things, I've been trying to see what that looks like what that looks like to muddled together all those pieces that I've been talking about. And just trying to see what comes of it in a way, what feels good, what kind of what works. So, One thing has been trying out and actually quite enjoying and finding a bit of a home in, at times a different church, including one that is a bit more high church a bit more. I kind of thought about it as times as pomp and circumstance, having more emphasis on ritual at least, and specific garments and, and things of that nature. An Anglican Church in the city where I live, generally St. George's Anglican Church. I've even been watching in the last little while some of their services they've been trying to livestream and enjoying that as well. Another item that I've been trying out is learning to find, learning to find and use other reasons sources from a variety of traditions and places for helpful readings and other liturgy pieces from my own use, including some from specifically LGBTQ plus geared

religion sources. Though they may be few a number, I've learned to try to find some of those and sometimes some some of those things and even looking at different traditions, as I say, even different religions entirely, I can still find great meaning and great worth in depth from that. I even in saying that I even I remember, I, I've, I've found in this time of COVID-19 we're all seemingly struggling and scrambling you know, especially organizations and groups trying to put together things for our communities. For the people we serve, as said organizations and groups.

The Human Rights Campaign and organization I at least follow and pay attention to somewhat recently, an LGBTQ rights organization in the States. The US recently did a interfaith service that they live streamed for LGBTQ folks. Although, I mean, I suppose anyone could have joined and found meaning in it, hopefully. But I certainly for myself found great meaning in that I really appreciated it. They had a homily they had scripture reading is they had a rabbi as part of it. They had a mom as part of it, and various other people from Christian denominations. Well, are various people from Christian nations as well. And I find great meaning in that I find great meaning in the unity in diversity, even when it's not just the diversity of our Community of Christ family or Christian family. I don't know that I I don't find it necessary to stick solely to finding meaning in those groups. While I consider myself a Christian, and likely, if I made a study of it would say that I find more, most meaning from Christian resources are littered gear readings or things of that nature from a Christian perspective or background of, you know, whatever sport I find special meaning in some ways I find in those moments when, and even specifically from other traditions from an LGBTQ perspective even but I find special meaning in that those times when I get to reach across the aisle so to speak to that and I don't know how many aisles there necessarily are in this metaphor but reach across an aisle and share in the meaning searching that I am doing that we are doing, that I understand we are doing and see a little take out there. Another item that I've been engaging in a little bit more at least at least more than I ever was before. For this item was taking is taking time to write and reflect. And even just in my head reflecting more, but writing as well on my thoughts on myself and specifically my thoughts on myself and religion, how they, they relate and say, I mean, really, there was a bit of a low bar there really, I wasn't really doing that type of critical thinking in terms of these areas. much at all, if at all before

but within the last while,

couple year, six years Shall we say, if thereabouts? I certainly have been doing more of that. I

don't know that I'm doing it every day or every week or anything, but alright.

Check it off, but I certainly am doing it more and I'm certainly finding value in it. I've even written different pieces of writing. Like I wrote a litany of swords, a piece of writing, sort of like a more of a devotional, I suppose. I wrote one for the morning, for waking up, that that I was writing for myself, specifically, is a little targeted as well. But I wrote that and I wrote another one for the evening with the intention of saying it sort of before beginning the day Before ending the day, and I I enjoy and savor the time that I spend as a critically thinking, but critically

thinking about myself about how I am religious, how I want to be religious and how that looks, and how that can look and how they can look going forward. Something else is been still maintaining and treasuring my connections to friends of different faiths, but also, of course, and also my many Community of Christ friends and family. My friends of all faiths, but certainly most numerous probably in that would be for me, Community of Christ friends and family. And I think I think community in and of itself is is such an important concept and sort of one of the cornerstones of, of the way I understand my faith and in a way, the way I understand the necessity of my faith, my faith is a interpersonal relation of faith. That is the faith of, as I understand it, Jesus Christ and His gospel. I've Lastly, in terms of this, I've taken time over the years to study some bout the different possible readings of biblical scripture, and how they relate to me as a bi trans woman. Having a variety of places whether classes taught by my dad, especially back in the day, now I put a knowledgeable trend or sorry about how I but a knowledgeable Bible guy online spaces like queer theology.com, or podcasts by queer Bible scholars, even and even many different places, I have found help and sustenance. I think I would say that even or especially early on in my journey, considering the role that they certainly did play early on in my life, early on in my journey coming out, coming out to myself. Some of these resources that I've just been speaking of just now, were essential. Some of the ones that I would find early on at that time, talking about how it was possible to be a by trans woman and a crew How to insert it into the middle maybe even as I have been doing a bisexual,

transgender Christian woman,

perhaps most importantly, has been learning to stand strong and true in my faith as a bi trans woman of faith, knowing that I know far from all the answers and that is okay. I can be sure and stand true and what I do know and understand and believe and discern for myself. I will try to find faith based sustenance where I can know that again, there is no set list of behaviors for me to follow that I must follow, to be the perfect Christian to be the perfect candidate. And within any of those other parts of myself.

Brittany Mangelson 48:07

I think that it's really important the work that you've done and the intentionality that you've brought to discovering who you are and all of these pieces of your puzzle. I'm really impressed that, you know, hearing this list of the things that you've done to be able to still connect with your community, connect with God, connect with Scripture, connect with theology. There's been a lot of work that's been put into this, and I know that so much harm has been done to the LGBTQ community, at the hands of Christians. And so for you to be able to still claim that identity as your own and not let other people's bigotry and hate ruin this community that you have and the set of belief systems I just think it's it's just worth noting, and I don't want to make it sound like anyone who believes Christianity is making the wrong choice or is weak or anything? That's not what I'm trying to say. It's just I want to acknowledge the the hurdles that you've had to overcome, because Christianity has not. Christianity has historically been a pretty hostile place for the LGBTQ community, and still is today. And so I just really appreciate that you have intentionally sought out things like queer theology, and biblical scholars who identify as queer and trying to figure out what that means for you as a bisexual trans woman. So I just

wanted wanted to acknowledge that because I think that so often we can just kind of assume that Okay, so somebody came out or somebody, just self disclose this about themselves, or whatever it may be, but this community that we've created for them is fine. I mean, kind of what I was saying before and, and there's not always an acknowledgment of the damage that has been done and how much people have to overcome, to be able to still claim themselves as Christian or as believers or as someone who's interested in the Bible or whatever it may be. There's just a lot that has to be worked through. And so I just really admire that you are doing the work and you've done the work because it's important to you, and you are claiming the Christian label on your own terms. And I think that that's a really important healthy thing for you to be able to do and, and I hope that it's empowering to you because, again, you're you're doing it on your own terms, you're making sure that you are creating a Christian framework that is going to uphold your worth and your identity. And ultimately, I believe that's what God wants is for you to feel God's Love in a way that makes sense to you. And so I just really admire that you're you're very intentional about creating this space for yourself.

Eliza Horning 51:12

Thanks. Yeah, there is work there. And I think I think for a lot of marginalized people, whether coming from work towards a face at all or not. I think that there there is a lot of work and sometimes it does go unnoticed or is not thought of, you mentioned the concept earlier of microaggressions. I mean, that's another another way that that there can be emotional duress brought down upon marginalized people, such as by people and trans people, trans women even more specifically in a way but I think that the I find the work that I have done important. I also, I mean, as someone in several marginalized identities I also don't want to push or push anyone forward or push anyone anywhere in the work that they might or they they could do, but really no work. There is no obligated work especially when When it comes to emotional navigation of life's turmoil is especially when that is through the lens of being a marginalized person life. I, as I understand that I feel as I, as I understand that as I feel, yeah, work. It's a concept you learn about in school and your beliefs. I remember thinking, wow, there's so much more that it falls under definition of work as you learn about it, you know, in science, class, motion and all these things. Well, even as an adult, you might still be learning about other things that fall under work. You learn about things like emotional labor, things like that, or the different work that can that is involved in a marginalized person explaining to you why something you said or something you did might be frustrating, and maybe that's even because that marginalized person does that. Did that Or has felt the need or felt the push to do that 20 times already that day or or anything of this work and in the case another element in a in this mix in this puzzle in this insert metaphor here for the being that is me that I have found, that I have found of great importance in this equation is social justice and speaking me up in defense of the marginalized and the wounded to a growing extent in recent years in both my Facebook activity and my physical real life actions, real world, non virtual world. I've tried to To show care and concern in that regard, speaking out against injustices I see, including those that happen to communities are part of, though not exclusively. I've grown more and more as I feel, I understand, to understand how interconnected such an impulse is as well to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Scripture many of us are likely quite familiar with from Luke four, where Jesus, in essence announces his mission. Fulfilling the Isaiah 61 scripture that he reads from the Spirit of

the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, is sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to let the oppressed go free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, that was reading from the NRSV, New Revised Standard Version version of the Bible. To me, that, that there, along with many of the other stories we read of Jesus and his work, screams, social justice, ensuring a justice, a justice of God, one based on how we are and live among one another justice in regard to the wealthy and privileged, but also the cis folks in a privilege, the straight folks and the privilege the white folks like myself and the privilege and so on and so forth. To me, even as I continue to fight within myself about, you know, going to church on a weekly basis, at least when I get to go back to a physical location, church building. And how I should probably be doing so to be a good proper Christian, even some respectability politics seeping into my inward thoughts. I consider in those moments that my fight and yearn for social justice, it justice is at the center of who I truly am as a bi trans Christian woman. Whether that action whether that be through protesting and disruptive events as I have sharing stories and links and fundraisers on social media, as I have sharing stories, links and fundraisers of people that I know some of my friends and family on Facebook might be squeamish about, perhaps, or being a facilitator for support groups and others events for fellow trans folks in my community. Each of these is a part of social justice, working toward a better world and to me, part of the live gospel of Jesus Christ. The Jesus I read and read of and follow, he walked with the streetwalkers, sex workers, the poor and the other downtrodden of his community. I would like to think I in little ways, as I can, I'm trying to follow his example.

Brittany Mangelson 58:45

I absolutely love that you bring in social justice to the story of Jesus, being a bisexual trans woman. I think that how long to say this, I think that that is so, so important to the narrative that I did not grow up with about Jesus, I did not learn those stories with that lens. And so in recent years, I've been very, very intrigued by and compelled by and challenged by that version of Jesus. So I just wanted to thank you for that.

Eliza Horning 59:27

I think that I appreciate that word used, you use the word lens. And I think that that's in many contexts in many ways. I mean, that's something the notion of having different lenses, different contexts with different lenses, to to approach different things including scripture, including the you know, people like Jesus, you know, and our understandings of him and no God can be quite helpful and speaking Certainly from, you know, rooted in my personal experience, I think it's quite helpful to be able to have these different lenses, especially when, you know, prevailing narratives can sometimes be trying to diminish people, facets of who one can understand oneself to be including myself in particular, for example, and so it's trying to, you know, cuz I guess I would say, for me growing up to a certain extent, I would say that I grew up in a prevailing narrative and a context in a church culture as I felt it around me. This is not just Community of Christ, this is not just my my individual congregation. This is the general mix of it all. culture as I felt it, I would say from this vantage point, that was kind of like we've touched on earlier, very vague in general, or very specific in hate in exclusion. So, as I, as we did kind of touch on earlier, I mean, sometimes, you know, that's specifically in the, you know, talking only

about all are welcome and not naming the welcome sometimes, that can be in other ways and, but, but sometimes, sometimes the culture the prevailing narrative that arises from the culture that that that one takes in myself certainly cannot make it or can be One that is not very sunny. Very, very helpful. And, and so, what does one do? What does one do when one recognizes? That one has many aspects of oneself that appear to be at odds? Or even if not necessarily at odds with Christ and God, but in a blank void, where does it fit? One might be asking oneself as one may have the one speaking. I think that i think that that for queer people for even Perhaps other communities but certainly speaking as a queer person, as a trans woman as a bisexual person, I think that it is from a climate like that, that arises the need for many, including myself, to look closer at what we have been told, the resources we are given, such as the Bible itself and take a closer look to take a look through our lens, knowing what we know or learning or understanding about ourselves about those other facets that seem at odds or seem to be out there when it comes to Christ and God and church and trying to put it together again, thinking of the puzzle, how do these fit together? And then I've spoken about how especially more recently, but even just kind of, in general, I've been piecing it together but certainly early on, I mean, that last one of those pieces I forget if it was the last one, but where I spoke about, about finding different readings and interpretations of Scripture and, and religion as a whole, how can how can church be a place that is fully accepting and understanding and and open to people like me? How does that look? How is that, okay? How is that valued by God? I think that finding our readings how we relate to How how we can see ourselves even in the scriptures. I think of a couple different things when I speak of this. One is how especially in some places that I have been and travelled in and live to really, specifically speaking at the moment about the US and Canada. Many people in these places in these countries have a tendency to represent in artistic interpretations perhaps, of Christ or, or even other people of biblical narratives as white or looking. Well, often times what I see happening is looking like themselves. We filter by default, the lens or lens become our own by default, when these stories, I would argue, are not our own, per se. Yeah, each and every one of us says stories or they are meant to be. And so that to say that it's not a problem per se, in a way to depict Jesus as white. I don't think what I do think is a problem is that certainly in the context of the US and Canada, that has become over time, certainly a very dominant, prevailing narrative prevailing image and and that I do see as a problem When a prevailing narrative that is probably not even historically accurate, if one literally are, biblically accurate, like it doesn't, it doesn't make sense to my mind at least, that if we were to draw Jesus as Jesus looked, so you would think that he would be white. But at the same time, I do think this is my point in a way that I think we can see and that is okay. We can read into scripture. ourselves, we can see ourselves and seeing ourselves in it helps us in our own understanding of who we are, and who our Lord is, and our Lord can be, who God is and who God can be. And I think that can be really important for queer people like myself. That is really important. And I think about also kind of along the same vein, but a little differently. Well, I think about how important in general the concept of the found or chosen family is to queer people. Whether that be specifically because perhaps as happens all too often, person in question has been kicked out of their home or the place that they felt safe or thought they were safe. And so they find a new family. They find people they find people along the way, their life. For myself, I've been fortunate not to be in that position. But I still value my queer family. My my fellow queers, my my family, my folks ut in different places, but especially now in

wealth, where we share the essential close parts of ourselves. And sometimes even we share our central close parts of ourselves. And we know that and we can let ourselves talk and talk and talk and share and share and share so easily because we are one together. it's important to queer people to find those people that you can do that with, that you can be one together, united, even in our differences, even our, you know, I know even in the community that I speak of, I feel I have We are so different. But you know, you're together we are we are one I feel and that is something special. When I think of as well though, Jesus and his disciples, Jesus finding his found family, if I may, Jesus, finding these people, these everyday folk, these people that decided to go with them and believe and understand these radical and wild ideas.

These people that let down the ropes, they're fishing things and followed and followed Jesus But these people, as I would like to see it, they were there in community with Jesus, they were there together. I mean, he was their teacher. And there was a different relationship there. But they were there together, they were there. As a family, they were there. Having found each other through God, yeah. But having found each other and being in community, community, in relationship with each other, and that is something special, that is something that I find essential and core to the narrative of Jesus of, of God of religion, of who and what I am yearning to be a part of, I understand to me that life, this is part of the way I understand the necessity of religion. To me is that is about the community and the relationship and the being together. Whether it be with biological family, if one is so lucky, or with found family or a mix of both, whether it be with Mother Mary, or one's disciples. I just think that, as I was saying, I think that it can be really helpful, useful, powerful, empowering tool, needed tool tool to be able to and it does take work as Brittany, as you were saying, but put a hopefully if you can get there if if and or get to a point in it where you feel more comfortable. I think that that is the work that that needs to be done is trying to find your place in, in community in with with Jesus with God. And part of that I find is through the Scriptures is through the Bible itself. And so how do I find myself in those in those tales from oh so long ago but even myself from 2020 and find myself in them, I believe.

Brittany Mangelson 1:14:08

I am a sociologist at heart. And so all this talk about community and finding your chosen family and using the gospel as a vehicle to bring people together in community just really speaks to my heart. So thank you that was that was beautifully articulated. And we did mention earlier in the episode that we are recording this in the midst of this global pandemic. And since you've talked so much about community, I'm wondering how you see communities that are now online, and how can we stay connected to each other in this time of social distancing and some places are using stronger words like shelter in place or quarantine or lock down. What What is your response to that with this social justice lens with this community driven lens?

Eliza Horning 1:15:11

Yeah. So I think that there that we're in an interesting time. It's time in some ways for reevaluation trying to find figure out what matters most to us. And how do we create that and create that in these new and uncertain terms and times that we are now living in? I think that the the online communities that we're now forced practically certainly, certainly for many

pretty much Forced to be a part of if one wants to seek out that, as I spoke of necessary in my mind community. I think that they can be so powerful and moving as well. I mean, I think that the online communities we've, we've, we have at our disposal, or at least since many contexts, some maybe don't have it all set up, at least not yet. But I think that our modern technology provides such a hopeful possibility. I hope that in this time, of struggle can be open To that technology, and that we can we can, we can be open, we can try to be more free at trying to just listen and just be there for people even in not being in the same physical space, trying to do what we want and should be doing for people, even one not in the same physical space. I think that our online tools are so important, but at the same time, we should not we should not we should recognize that they have their limitations as well. And I think that I think that the key to me is recognizing a balance or trying to find a balance in everything, but certainly, in trying to spend time in self reflection, contemplation, perhaps spending time with loved ones, if you're staying at home with others, perhaps as I am, for example, but also those those zoom calls and FaceTime and whatnot, that we are now having to realize so much more on for our needed community. However, at the same time, in this time of questioning, and uncertainty, and who knows what will come of this, For how long will we be in this and all of these questions, I'm sure for many of us, are swirling in our minds work In other words put, otherwise put this time global pandemic, I feel a lot of those things are synonymous. I do find myself thinking of a couple of things in particular, one that we cannot forget the forgotten those that we as a society, at least, tend to forget about and not care about anyway, even when it's not a time of global pandemic. The sex workers, the First Nations peoples, and yes, the queer and trans folk to and imagine that sometimes these groups, these people, some of the ones I've just listed in the many others, many other marginalized communities, sometimes they overlap the, the intersect concept of intersectionality perhaps they're the Many, many trans sex workers are people that I hold them my thoughts on a daily basis. People who are struggling right now I'm sure. But also we must bring all of these, all of these people that we, as I say, should not forget about these causes these people and problems around the world. We should bring them forward with us through the pandemic over to the other side, whenever you may reach it. Who knows when that may be but we should be ready for it. We must cross over to the other. Having become experts at zoom and FaceTime and whatnot, and ready for the fight the good and needed fight the fight not only for but with, with our kinfolk in, in metaphorical arms. In this type of pandemic, in this time of pandemic, I have come back back to the place I grew up, to wait it all out, while physically distancing with my mom and dad, number sibling. And in doing so, everything has and I'm sure it has for a lot of people shifted, then up ended routines change if not completely discarded. I mean, I mean, but only temporarily. modes of thinking and doing acting up ended and forced to be re evaluated. For in this time. We must look firmly both inward and outward, looking and reflecting on both ourselves. But also to those around us, our circles of people we may have been in the habit of seeing together and even broader, more broadly around the world and society, we must look and as I said, reflect, to hopefully return with more wisdom and determination on how to face each new minute of each new day.

We should be checking in on folks, while physically distancing right now. check in on those in your circles in marginalized communities, though, no need to explicitly and unsteadily do so because they're in a part of marginalized community, but just make a point of checking in on

them almost just because you care about them which hopefully you do. And once we're through, and onto the other side of this pandemic, may we work hand in hand, in hope for the better world that I know, I hope I yearned. I, I know, we can create, the one that we will dream and plan have now together, as Community of Christ together as Christians together, united. That is my hope for us in this pandemic. And for us, as we move forward from it, whenever that may be.

Brittany Mangelson 1:23:40

Eliza, you have given us so much to think about and your words have spoken truth to power, which I think is such an important part of what Jesus did in his time and to the powers that were prevailing against the country. Unity and against him. And I, I think that it's just really poignant that you brought up so many of the marginalized folks and communities and the you pointed out the intersectionalities that they often have, and really challenged us to look beyond our own privilege outside of our own worldview outside of our own safe bubble that we sometimes get lost in and to really live the Christian message of bringing the good news, salvation here and now the peaceable kingdom here and now to those communities to all and, and I just, I just want to thank you for that. It was really a joy to have you on the podcast and I always before we end I just want to give you one final opportunity If you miss anything if I didn't ask a question, if there's something that you want to share, Now is your time to do so.

Eliza Horning 1:25:12

Well, Thanks Brittany, I've really enjoyed this opportunity and sharing a bit about myself and the story. I don't think that there's anything else that really springs to mind at the moment. But I, I've, as I say, I enjoyed this opportunity to share with others a little bit into who I am and who I am, as I say, send, centered around, grounded by these important facets and parts of my identity including being a Christian and being Community of Christ. So yeah, thank you, Brittany. I've enjoyed my time here and thank you.

Brittany Mangelson 1:26:11

Yeah, thank you. It's been great having you on!

Josh Mangelson 1:26:22

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