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Project Zion

Katie Langston 0:16

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Karin Peter 1:00

Welcome to Common Grounds part of the Project Zion podcast where we discuss all things liturgical calendar. The liturgical calendar takes us through the seasons and holy days of the Christian year beginning with Advent, and concluding with the last Sunday of Ordinary Time, which is called Reign of Christ Sunday, or in some traditions Christ the King Sunday. Now, today we're taking, we're having an interview that's part of a short series in Common Grounds, where we have been discussing the small group resource sacred space. You can find that resource on the world church website at cofchrist.org. On the worship page, next to the worship, outlines and sermon helps. Our guests for these discussions about sacred space have been the folks who have been actually writing the resource the different pieces of this sacred space lectionary series, which is a small group resource for use in congregations or online or other small gatherings. We wanted to hear from our writers how participating in creating this resource that's based on the liturgical calendar and the lectionary has affected them outside of their writing. In other words, have they become more conscious of the seasons and holy days of the year? How has the journey through the calendar impacted their discipleship? So today, we're visiting with Royleane Otteson. Hi, Royleane.

Royleane Otteson 2:41

Hi, Karen.

Karin Peter 2:42

It's really nice to have you here. So our listeners may have heard some of the podcast episodes that you have been on before on Project Sign but if they have not, you live in Redmond, Washington. And you are part of the pastor team in your local congregation. But more importantly for our discussion today, you are just about completing your spiritual director program that you have been in for some time. So first, can you tell us a little bit about that?

Royleane Otteson 3:21

Oh, well, first of all, I just want to thank you so much for inviting me to be here today. It's always a pleasure to chat and be here with Project Zion. And I love the work that you're doing here. My spiritual direction program is it's part of the Franciscan Spiritual Training Center down in Portland and I started it a couple of years ago, I myself learned about spiritual direction and was going through a faith transition. I like to call it an expansion. I originated in the LDS faith and was looking for some more tools and someone to be able to talk to you honestly about my journey. How I was doing, I found out about spiritual direction and learned that it was

somebody who could companion me on my journey as I'm trying to pick up pieces, and put pieces back together and figuring out what was working for me. And so, in my journey with my own spiritual director, I recognized that this was something in many ways that I was already doing with a support group, a faith support group that we were running in our area here to help other members that were going through the faith expansion as well. And so I wanted to learn more about how you get training for that. And so I entered the training program and I will be graduating in June and it's been absolutely life changing and one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life.

Karin Peter 4:49

Wonderful. Well, I can personally recommend having a spiritual director I have a spiritual director that I work with and see on a monthly basis. So good for you.

Royleane Otteson 5:00

Thank you.

Karin Peter 5:01

So prior to your work on the sacred space resource, what was your experience with the liturgical calendar?

Royleane Otteson 5:11

None. Other than anything other than, you know, celebrating Christmas, Easter, you know, those holidays, really in the LDS faith, there's, we don't follow the liturgical calendar. And so I didn't really understand, especially when I hear about Good Friday or Palm Sunday, I didn't understand or Lent I didn't understand what any of those things were, or Ordinary Time and so being invited to write for Sacred Space was really a wonderful opportunity. It helped me delve more into understanding the symbolism and the meaning behind all those things and understanding that it's really a journey, a journey, almost a spiritual direction. companioning journey with Jesus and His life throughout the year.

Karin Peter 6:06

So now you have not only been participating as a resource writer with this and experiencing the calendar in that way, but you are actively engaged in the life of a congregation. Can you tell us a little bit about how you see the Liturgy of the calendar year being lived out in your congregation?

Royleane Otteson 6:31

Well, our congregation follows a liturgical calendar and they follow the lectionary that Community of Christ has and from small little things like decorations in the sanctuary, to participating in special services, they'll have a candlelight ceremony around Christmas Eve time, and things like that. And also just the, what I appreciate about the liturgical counter and I see it lived in my congregation as well as it goes along with the seasons of the year, in many ways, a lot of the themes go along with kind of the transformation of spring, right and like, and so it goes along with the seasons of the year. And so it's definitely a more being present with every

season. And in my congregation, they do a really good job following along with that, and I appreciate that.

Karin Peter 7:26

Excellent. So you did agree a couple years ago to write for Sacred Space. And as you said, you had not experienced that in your faith journey at that point. Sacred Space really made you kind of dive into the lectionary and the liturgical calendar kind of all at the same time, and you did that? Actually, I'm not sure you were fully participating in the congregation at that time. I don't. I'm pretty sure you weren't.

You weren't you technically, a member of Community of Christ at the time, but you still agree to do it. So why did you agree?

Royleane Otteson 8:07

Well, first of all, where I was in my faith journey, I, in many ways felt sad that my, my voice wasn't necessarily wanted or needed in my past religious community and the to have you invite me to come and write for Sacred Space, I was not a member of Community of Christ. It was eye opening and inspiring to me that a church would trust somebody who was not a member of their church to come in and write resources and to be open to the ideas that I was bringing to the table. And that was extremely touching to me that that invitation was even given to me and then because I was starting on my spiritual direction program that I saw, it was about the time you know is about that time. I also received that invitation, I thought I took it as a chance to learn more, along with my spiritual direction program. And it would be an opportunity for, you know, pretty much read to learn a lot, and be able to also offer things that I was learning from my program. And I recognized that my voice was probably different than some that you were having writing there, especially because I was not a member at the time and that Community of Christ always values all voices, the Worth of All Persons. And I was grateful to be invited to do that.

Karin Peter 9:34

So we should tell our listeners that the pieces you write for a sacred space are in fact the spiritual practices each week. Each weekly outline a Sacred Space has a spiritual practice in it, and those have been created and are lifted out intentionally to follow the liturgical calendar through The year so can you tell us a little bit about how you would prepare to write some of those pieces for Sacred Space?

Royleane Otteson 10:09

Well, as I said before, I didn't know anything about the liturgical calendar when I was invited to do this, and I had started my program, and so was learning a little bit there. Because it is Franciscan based. They also have some of that within their theology, and they follow the calendar. So I really had to go online and learn. So I just started learning and learning about what the meaning? What is the meaning of Advent? What is the meaning of this, what is the meaning of all these different things? And so I would go and prepare on online. And I would look at ideas of what other people have written ideas, many different spiritual practices that

were used during during that time. And I would take some of those ideas and then kind of bring them into where I thought, especially as a at the time of seeker, would be meaningful to someone who may be had never heard of the liturgical calendar like myself, my understanding of what I was writing for spiritual practices was that Sacred Space was it was for small group resources. But also my understanding was that it was being used with seeker groups. And so I really felt like I could be that voice to help them understand this is what this holiday means. This is the symbolism behind this practice. Even if you don't believe in any of this, literally, here's the symbolism. Here's the intention. Here's what you can do, by using this spiritual practice. And so that going online was extremely helpful. And then just trying to bring it back around to how I felt I could help myself and anybody who was following in my path coming from a different faith who didn't understand liturgical calendar, so I was very, try to be really thoughtful about the words and using words that would help people understand the meaning behind it, I would go to some of these websites and they'd have all these big words and I'd have to go to the dictionary and look up all those big words. If I didn't know, so I guess you'd say I tried to translate it into seeker language.

Karin Peter 12:05

And you did an excellent job, in fact, so much so that your explanations of the different holy days and seasons began to be used at the opening of each of the weekly lessons. So on the first Sunday of Advent, there'd be a little description of what Advent was. And it's not in the spiritual practice. It's in the welcome, but you actually it just got transferred from that up into to be the explanation because they were excellent descriptions of what was happening and how we were engaging with Scripture that week, in the small group. And so they have been meaningful for for a lot of different kinds of groups who use the Sacred Space resource. So really did as you began to write in this way, and to learn more about it, what kind of an impact or Was there any impact on how you began to experience your discipleship throughout the different Christian seasons?

Royleane Otteson 13:09

Well, I definitely was more present and aware of the season that we were in. And just understanding what Advent meant that it was waiting for birth and waiting for a birth of light. And so things like that I became more present and understood the Advent to be a season of slowing down. Whereas in our culture here in america, christmas season is actually very busy. And I began to recognize that a lot of this season's through out with the liturgical calendar, help you slow down and be more present with your family and what's going on. Whereas the, I would say societal culture around us is constantly pushing us especially as a mom to go go, go, go, go and make everything happen and you have to, you know, do this, this In business, or else you're failing. And so for me, it was a huge welcome in my life as a mother of three boys and coming out of a religion also that I felt like I had to go go go all the time, it helps me learn most of the seasons are very much about slowing down and being present. And for me, I found out that that has definitely helped me live that out in my life by learning about those.

Karin Peter 14:27

So earlier before we began recording, you and I were talking about the importance of, of deep listening, of being aware of journey and listening to the story of others and being respectful of that. The way you're describing this, it's almost as if the seasons the practices, help us listen more deeply, to the Scripture. Listen more deeply to the ministry of Jesus, listen more deeply to if we're in a small group sharing to each other They're into our stories. That same language that we were using earlier about being aware, listening deeply is what I hear you using here and how it affected you.

Royleane Otteson 15:11

Yes, absolutely. And I think that was partially learning about the liturgical calendar and living it out that way. It was partially my spiritual direction program and learning how to sit and listen, without having everything in my head of what I want to say back to them coming up. I was just listening. And I translated that over into the seasons as well and into my journey with the liturgical calendar.

Karin Peter 15:40

So right now, as we're recording this, we are in a pandemic around the world we have the COVID-19 virus that has upended our daily lives. And we are sheltering in in the state of Washington, and most of the rest of the states in the United States. So how might our listeners use the spiritual practices in the sacred space resource in their current reality, whether they are at home alone and isolated, or whether, like you they are an extrovert at home with three or four introverts or whether whether they are parents at home with small children, how might the spiritual practices be helpful during this time of heightened anxiety?

Royleane Otteson 16:35

I think they can be extremely, extremely helpful right now they're you. There's so many different ways to use them. You can use them every day, yourself personally, none of them have to be done in groups. They may be written to be done in a group a prayer or something like that. But it's something that you can do by yourself for yourself. So you can do them every day. As a kind to start your day, like as the meditation or to end the evening, if you need some calm energy, you can use them during that time. You can use them if you have congregations that you're meeting online or in the middle of the week, our congregation is doing a middle of the week meeting. And during that time, we're doing a spiritual practice and all of those because people were finding that they just need some type of connection and feeling connected with spirit and calm and peaceful because this is a time of no control. And then the other way you can use them as also if your family if you're gathering your family together. It's very easy to do so many of them just together even with younger kids or older kids around the dinner table. Any way that you would like to they're really very versatile and they can be adapted to whatever you need. If there's certain language in them that you don't like. You can feel free to change the language. If something asked for a candle and You don't have one, you know, you could use something else just turn on a lamp or a light. So you just think, open the box out of the box, open the box and and adapt it however you need it. But it can be very helpful right now to just to calm, calm and help you connect with the divine and recognize that we have no control right now and just let go and surrender.

Karin Peter 18:26

It's a difficult time for that. I can see where some of these spiritual practices that you've done would really be great to do with families with small children, some of them have actions, some of them have ways of breathing and sensing what's going on around you. And so I would encourage people to not look at the weekly outline for whatever week you're in, but to take a little time and check out some of the others and see if there might be something that you can use for your family. Yeah, so Are there particular resources that are favorites of yours for exploring spiritual practices?

Royleane Otteson 19:08

Honestly, Community of Christ website. There's so many of them on there now, what we've written the resources on they're wonderful. I have several websites that one of my favorites is Abbey of the arts. It's by Christine Vaulters Painter and she is right spiritual practices for Celtic Christianity so they're very earth based. And she that's a great website she will send you emails every day with like a quotes and meditations and stuff. Another person I like to go to I like poetry a lot. Often I'll read a poem to help center me and then I'll do a meditation. So Poetry Unbound is the brand new podcast by On Being Pádraig Ó Tuama, I think that's how you say his name, Tuama. He is an Irish poet. Who tells you a little bit about the poem reads the poem, then discusses poem then reads the palm again and it's only like eight minutes. That's a good way to center yourself as well. I also like Jan Richardson's poetry and then you can just look up spiritual practices online. And there's so many different ideas out there that come from all kinds of different philosophies and religions. I mean, there's there's even humanists all kinds of different Universal, Unitarian Universalists have a lot of good ones on their website as well. So there's lots of different places you can go to find more spiritual practices and just choose the ones that that speak to you.

Karin Peter 20:49

So some people might be uncomfortable with spiritual practices that don't come from the Christian tradition. However, as we were talking earlier, most of the Christian spirits are spiritual practices that we use have come from some other tradition and we've, we've borrowed them in in some way. And so feel free to use scripture passages and use those in place of other language and, and explore that.

Royleane Otteson 21:19

Yes. I, my my biggest thing I would just say, we're all sheltering in place. This is a great time to explore and open up and experiment with what works for you and your spiritual practices.

Karin Peter 21:32

So since we've talked about this a little bit, what I'd like to do is have you walk us through a spiritual practice,

Royleane Otteson 21:42

Okay,

Karin Peter 21:43

So that we can see what that feels like. And we, we have one here, selected for the time we're in. Now, not only because we're in a Holy Week, but also because of the situation that the world finds It's self in right now. And this does come from the Sacred Space small group resource. And before we go through this, because we'll end with the spiritual practice, I just wanted to say that we look forward to your continued writing on the Sacred Space resource as we finish up this year and go in to next year. So let's close with that, and experience this particular practice together.

Royleane Otteson 22:32

Okay, this is a practice that I wrote for Good Friday. And so I'm going to read so our spiritual practice for Good Friday is going to be called the prayer of compassion. And I'm going to read the following to you just as a little bit of a description, and this is the beginning of the spiritual practice. Throughout many religious traditions, we are taught the importance of naming our loss and our sorrows. When we suppress our sorrow. It not only makes it worse, that it can literally make our bodies ill. In the Christian tradition, Good Friday represents the day that Jesus died on the cross. His body was literally broken and bleeding on the cross, Jesus cries out, oh, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? When we recognize a name, Jesus's suffering, we are connecting to not only his suffering but ours as well as others. How many times have we cried out the same thing that Jesus did on the cross? It's the suffering that makes the resurrection such an incredible story. Life and Death, peace and suffering. Life is one big paradox. The name Good Friday comes from this concept. Joy is so sweet because of the bitter we have tasted from the pain when we have our heart It's broken open and naming our pain. We can then have compassion for others who suffer and truly appreciate the new life brought out of death. We'll now do a prayer of compassion. I'll read the first line. And then Karen, he'll read the second line. God, open our eyes, that we may witness and see the suffering of those around us.

Karin Peter 24:29

God, open our eyes.

Unknown Speaker 24:37

God, open our ears, that we may hear the stories of those oppressed among us.

Karin Peter 24:43

God, open our ears.

Royleane Otteson 24:51

God opened our hearts, that we may be filled with compassion and love for all.

Karin Peter 24:59

God open our hearts.

Royleane Otteson 25:05
Amen.

At this point, if you were in a small group together or with your family or by yourself, you can ask in what ways do you see that God is opening you up to see the suffering, to hear those oppressed, and who you are feeling love and compassion for, especially at this time during the pandemic. This is just a beautiful spiritual practice to do. And so we see a lot of suffering going on right now. So I would just encourage everyone to look and see.

Karin Peter 25:41

Thank you Royleane, for being with us today on project plan for these miniseries of sacred space as part of common grounds. So once again, you've been a wonderful guests, and we look forward to your continued participation.

Royleane Otteson 25:58

Thank you so much, Karin. inviting me I've loved our conversation today.

Karin Peter 26:03

So for our listeners, I'm Karin Peter, thank you again for listening.

Josh Mangelson 26:14

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