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Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 0:17

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

Carla Long 0:33

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host Carla Long. And today I have a very special guest that I used to tool around Europe with not so long ago. Her name is Sandee Gamet, and she is working for the church in Europe. And when I say in Europe, I'm not being very specific because she actually goes everywhere. Basically, she is on the move all the time. So Sandee, thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule to be with us today.

Sandee Gamet 1:03

You're welcome.

Carla Long 1:06

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Sandee Gamet 1:09

Well, I guess this is my third sort of career, started out as an elementary school music teacher for 27 years worked for the church as the peace building specialist for 16 years. And then, as I was getting ready to retire, Joey Williams approached me and asked me if I would like to come to Europe as a World Service Corps volunteer, and I said, Yes.

Carla Long 1:37

So I thought World Service Corps Volunteers are like, teenagers and kids in their 20s. So is this a special kind of deal?

Sandee Gamet 1:45

Yeah, it's how you feel like yes. So if I feel like a 20 year old, maybe I qualified,

Carla Long 1:51

And you act like a 20 year old for sure, Sandee.

Sandee Gamet 1:56

So, um, I think that, well, I think a couple of things it took a visionary person. So I think Joey, in particular looks for individuals who have gifts, talents that match a vision he has for the area that he's working in. And in this instance, that several people in the Dutch church felt that a way to enliven to bring the church into the future in the Netherlands was to create a new hymnal, the one that they had developed with, and with church resources in it was from the 1959 gray hymnal that was their last project that in that regard. So, Joey knew that I had some music background and enjoyed it. And also that I was good at facilitating groups. And so that was one of the projects that he had in mind. He also knew that we needed to develop a Child Protection Policy for Western Europe. And then I had some interest in doing that. And so he had that in my on my list of potential things to do. And then the third one was using the skills that I had as a peacebuilding specialist for the church in areas that it might be helpful here in Europe. The fourth one that he didn't mention when he was asking me to come over was to do whatever he asked me to do.

Carla Long 3:49

Of course, that should always be a Joey's playbook. Everyone knows that.

Sandee Gamet 3:54

Yes, but what that has created is just this one Wonderful wealth of different in varied activities, responsibilities and ministries that I have been asked to provide, which is really made this time here amazing, absolutely amazing.

Carla Long 4:20

So it sounds like you're keeping pretty darn busy. And I'm really excited to hear about more about some of these ministries that you're working with and providing and so where do you want to start? What do you wanna start talking about?

Sandee Gamet 4:33

Well, maybe the biggest one that hot another kind of all big but the one that I initially came over to begin was the new hymnal for the Dutch congregations. So in January of 2016, we had our first meeting and we have created hymnal, that will have approximately 250 hams in it. Some of them from current Dutch resources that were really significant for the folks. So they've kept them in this new hymnal, but the majority from the Community of Christ Sings hymnal, which means that we've taken the text in English and have translated the text. And we have a variety we have had three, actually we've got a new one person now, contractual translators, not church members, who have done a lot of our translating for us. And then we have several church members who have been able to translate some of the hymns for us. It really is an amazing, amazing gift to be able to translate poetry and I certainly have a come to a realization of how difficult and how gifted people are who can who can translate the English poetry into another language keeping a rhyming scheme keeping the meter of the music consistent. It's been really an amazing, interesting, challenging project that I've been involved in. I've learned a lot about this world of publishing something, which I did not know hardly anything about before I started this. So there's been an enormous learning curve, and then also the language so I have minimal Dutch. The team I chose I chose for a variety of reasons the interest in music, they accompany services, they translate English Already into Dutch. So all of those skills came together to build this team that meets together once a month to look at the translations and their conversation about, well, this word just isn't nuance quite, you know, the right way in Dutch. So we go back to the translator for some revisions. And we also I've also gotten to share about who we are as Community of Christ. When I asked someone to translate one of our communion hymns, his name is Kurt Landman, and he wrote back and he said, so how do you do communion? And so I had a chance to send him all the varieties of ways that communion might be done and are some of the traditions and I sent some pictures and then I found a video from one of our church members that had posted on Facebook so I could actually show him what service Look like, which of course helped him then translate the music. And there have been just other examples like that, where we've had an opportunity to share who we are as Community of Christ, and the unique things that we bring to the Christian world. So one of our favorite translators us, Sita defries. I said, We gifted him with one of the Community Sings books, because he's done so much work. And he's, he said, The world needs to have these hymns. And every once in a while, he has, he brings together people just to sing. He's done a lot of translating of other kinds of English texts and hymns. And so we've said Feel free to use translations that you have provided us so you know, who knows how far all those This will, will spread throughout the Netherlands and Europe and the German church, you know, heard about the Dutch project. And so they, they've gotten a few hymns that they've translated into English and then I have the capacity to put it into the music. And so yeah, so it's spreading. It's been really an amazing experience.

Carla Long 9:27

So things are things are definitely happening.

Sandee Gamet 9:30

Yeah, yeah, we either we hope to either haven't done the end of this year or the spring of next year to where were some things that we haven't quite got sorted yet with copyrights and those things to figure out exactly. How we can set a secure deadline but yeah, it's exciting.

Carla Long 9:52

It is exciting and it is a lot of work. I yeah. Remember the translations process and it it's a it's frustrating and it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of patience. And still, once you're finished with it, people are like, I wouldn't have said it like that.

Sandee Gamet 10:07

Yeah, yeah. Sure, that's true, I'm sure. And you know, people did the best job they could when they did the work for the, what we call the green hymnal, that is the church hymnal in the Netherlands. And they did the very best. And when we go back and look at some of those translations, you know, people are saying, Yeah, it needs some updating, you know, so it's, I'm sure that this book will also or the years have people doing saying the same kinds of things,

Carla Long 10:37

Of course, and I totally understand what your translator friend was talking about. The world does need those hymns. We have some really amazing hymns in Community of Christ Sings. It's just incredible. Yeah, I'm so glad that they're going to be translated into Dutch and that our Dutch friends and members can sing those wonderful hymns too. It's a big project Sandee

Sandee Gamet 11:00

Yeah, it is. It is that I just loved all of it. So it's been really, really fun. So,

Carla Long 11:08

Where do you live right now? I live

Sandee Gamet 11:09

I live in Berlin, Germany, Berlin.

Carla Long 11:12

And so you travel to the Netherlands quite frequently to work on the hymnal?

Sandee Gamet 11:16

Once a month, which is about an eight hour train ride there and back so I've I've enjoyed the public transportation system here in Europe immensely. And there are times when I haven't enjoyed it so much when trains are late and I miss connections and have to figure out how to make the next connection and thank heavens I travel enough that when things go awry, I'm able to figure my way through the system to get where I'm hoping to go, yeah.

Carla Long 11:52

I gotta tell you I miss riding the trains in Europe. I used to get so much work done or so much sleeping then on those trains. I visit

Sandee Gamet 11:59

I've read a lot of books. Yes, it's I love it too. I get to see the countryside, change with the seasons. And sometimes there's a different route that that's taken because of they change the route. And so I see different parts of the countries that I'm traveling to. So yeah, I just I love it.

Carla Long 12:22

Yeah. And I do remember like traveling from Germany to Netherlands or Netherlands to Germany, you knew there is a difference, like the windmills changed color. And the houses look different. I mean, even though the countries are really very close, and the languages are somewhat close. There's a definite difference. I always found that fascinating.

Sandee Gamet 12:44

Yeah, Yeah, me too. I just love to see the you can just feel it. And the the passengers are different in the countries. So in Germany, passengers, it's really expected that you're really really quiet when it first arrived here and I was on the public bus system or the public train city train system. People, I could see people who are actually talking on phones and I couldn't hear them. And going, oh, wow, this is a whole nother culture here. And in the train in Germany, the people on the train are really, really quiet and soft spoken. When I get on the trains in the Netherlands, things are a bit more lively. People smile more easily communicate with strangers more easily. So there's just some wonderful cultural differences that I appreciate besides the food and all the other good stuff,

Carla Long 13:44

Of course. Oh, how cool. Oh, I love hearing about this. So. So that's the Dutch hymnal and we're hoping that it will be moving forward soon.

Sandee Gamet 13:52

Yes.

Carla Long 13:54

Fingers crossed.

Sandee Gamet 13:55

Yeah.

Carla Long 13:56

And so another one of your projects was working with what did you say?

Sandee Gamet 14:02

Well, with Kassel the kind Well, that's something well, I didn't list that. But the other one of the other projects was the child protection, creating something for Western Europe, which is still in process that's getting. It's a bit more complex than I anticipated it being but hopefully we'll get it done.

Carla Long 14:25

I hope so too. Yeah. So the child protection but I was actually thinking about the congregation that Kassel too.

Sandee Gamet 14:32

Kassel actually came about after I got here. So what occurred was prior to my arriving in November of 2015, in June or May of that year, the Germans have an annual Pentecost retreat over Pentecost weekend, and a young man named Marvin from Kassel living in a Kassel which is about an hour from where the retreat is held, came for the first time to Pentecost retreat. And he was received so warmly, that he changed his mind from deciding to be confirmed in the what's called the, well in English, probably the Lutheran Church of Germany, to wanting to be part of Community of Christ. His mom came to Germany in her early 20s and belong to Community of Christ back in the Philippines. So she's a Filipino, and I would have that Marvin's interest in knowing more and becoming part of Community of Christ. When I came to Germany, then I was asked if I would be willing to give Of Water and Spirit lessons to Marvin So, once a month I don't even remember how often once twice a month, I would take the train to Kassel which is a three hour train ride. And I met with Marvin and his mom, Ronnalynn and Ronnalynn's cousin Edna, and Daniel from here in Germany, Daniel Erickson, who is here in Berlin with his family, the Erickson's also accompanied me, because I wasn't sure if maybe it might be helpful to have somebody who could translate into Germany, into German if needed. So we met and went through the Of Water and Spirit, which was an awesome experience, and I was able to preside over his baptism and confirmation the following Pentecost conference. And in the time that we were meeting or Ronnalynn, and Edna and Marvin were asking about, well, couldn't we continue this gathering? Because they also had cousins, an aunt, who also lived in Kassel and all of them had been without the Community of Christ for over 20 years. So they were anxious to meet and have that be part of their lives again. So in conversation, we decided that yes, we would begin to meet as a group for worship. So that led to them becoming an emerging congregation. And this year was our second year as an emerging congregation, and I'm Pastor for that group. So something I thought I would never ever do.

Carla Long 17:54

I'm like you Sandee, I remember I think it was President Veazey, who said being a pastor is the hardest job In the church and I always thought no way is that true. But yes way that's very true. Yes, sir is the hardest job in the church. It's so important one is an important one. So how often do you get to meet with the folks in Kassel.

Sandee Gamet 18:14

We meet once a month on a Saturday afternoon at three it was decided to meet Saturdays because Sunday's are for them family days. And it was important that they be able to come and not either take away time from the expectations of their families. So those that have spouses are their spouses don't belong to Community of Christ. So they're not at this point not involved in the congregation. So the Saturday afternoon was seemed to be the best so I we usually meet from three o'clock to six and time flies by. And then over the last year, we thought that maybe coming a second time during the month. So last year, I did meet twice a month, the second time being more of a study time, because we just simply didn't have enough study time. And when we, we came just on the Saturdays, and now we're thinking that in order to include another person who's become part of our congregation last year, who belongs to Community of Christ and lives in Frankfurt, and they no longer have a congregation in that area. So she comes from Frankfurt, which is about not quite a two hour train ride, and joins us on Saturdays and so we decided to meet longer on Saturdays so that she can also be part of the learning time that When we gather so yeah, it's the third Saturday of the month, every month.

Carla Long 20:06

Cool. That sounds really wonderful. I know that building a congregation from the ground up is not easy, but I'm, it sounds like it's been. You've had some people who are interested in sticking around and helping it grow.

Sandee Gamet 20:19

Oh my goodness. Yes. They are so dedicated. The three core members are so dedicated and we have two young adults. Kiko who's the son of one of our members, Elisa, who's 21 has had found our group to be more interesting than the Protestant church that his family had been attending. So he comes occasionally. And then Marvin, who was the person who kind of started at all is part of the congregation also. So it's, we have a nice day. range. And sometimes they plan the services or I plan them or my plans them or we've done them together. And every single time we meet, every single person has a part in the worship. I think that if I would plan a service and not include someone, they would be upset because they didn't have responsibility, which is pretty unusual, I think for congregational life.

Carla Long 21:27

It's very unusual and very cool.

Sandee Gamet 21:29

Is very cool. Yeah.

Carla Long 21:32

Ah, wow. So you have the Dutch hymnal that takes a lot of your time you have being pastor of the emerging congregation in Kassel. And if I remember correctly, Kassel is famous for this huge statue of Hercules right. Well, that's very true. Yeah, I remember that statue. That was good times. And so what else keeps you busy?

Sandee Gamet 21:53

Oh, well, let's see. I just was a staff member at winter camp this past year this past Dember into January. And so I've been to winter camps ever since we came. So Carla, you brought me to the first winter camp and I've been to everyone since

Carla Long 22:11

I did. I'm so sorry about that. Tell us a little about winter camp. What is it?

Sandee Gamet 22:15

Yeah, well, winter camp is the gathering of youth from age 15 to 25. from all over Europe, people are invited to come for the last three years or the first three years that I was here attending. We had it at the German reunion grounds, which is in a little village called Hillsong. And this year, because we have a congregation developing in Brussels, it's easier for gathering more youth from Brussels in France, if we moved into the Belgian area. So this year, we met in Little Village in Belgium close to a city called LaRoche. So we had 55 people this time, and we could never have house them at wholesale doesn't have the capacity for that. So we had seven countries and six languages represented in males 55. And I think about 15 of us were staff out of that. 55.

Carla Long 23:26

Let me just stop you right there, Sandee. And I want to just say, again, the gravity of what you just said, You have seven countries represented six languages represented. Now all of you camp directors out there. I want you to think about that for a second, think about how hard it is to put a camp together with everyone speaking the same language. And this, I mean, it just offers a whole new level of difficulty. Yeah, and a chance to grow and a chance to learn about all these different cultures. So there's definitely a huge positive side to it as well, but it's really just difficult. Okay, continue on.

Sandee Gamet 24:01

Yeah, it is it's challenging. But we had adults there an adult who could help translate into Dutch for the Dutch kids who didn't capture everything. But it was amazing how much English everyone spoke. I mean, it's just getting more and more common for youth to be able to have a really fluent capacity with English. But still, there are needs and not everyone has that same fluency. So there were individuals who could translate for a couple German kids who had less capacity in English. We had a Spanish translator, who sat next to a couple of kids whose Spanish was more, whose English was more limited and needed some Spanish help. And we had one of our staff people who his name is Shawn Mo, and he's this amazing musician. Jazz clarinetist and pianist and he helped lead a band for one of our activities, and so between his Spanish and his English and they perform for us at the New Year's Eve gathering that we had. So it was just really, it was an amazing experience. So the theme was 2020 vision, which we found out, only translate to the States. Because 2020 vision, obviously seeing clearly with good eyesight, but here, when you have perfect eyesight, it's 1.0. So we had to kind of explain what that meant, but it also was a good thing for the year 2020. So, we just learned all sorts of things that you don't anticipate having to know when you're doing things multicultural, really,

Carla Long 25:59

That is crazy and darn it, what a missed opportunity. I had some of translation, goofs like that myself when I was working in Europe, none that I want to talk about here on the podcast. But I certainly understand what's going on. And I think that you participate in a lot of other camps during the year if that if I'm right up. Yeah,

Sandee Gamet 26:23

I usually go to the Pentecost retreat, since Germany is part of my assignment and, and I also go to the Netherlands twice for their fall gathering, usually in November, the first of November and then also what Postcomm which is Easter camp, so over the Easter holiday, they gather at a retreat center for their annual family gathering. So yeah, so I go to all of those things, and I've been asked to provide a workshop when I've gone to the UK and been divided to do some things there and some another workshop at their peace colloquy this past time so I've done a variety of things, made some visits and Spain I have absolutely no Spanish. So those were visits and that I just got to see the country and got to, to meet with some of the church folks who, who are part of the Spanish church family there. So it's been the advent of Czechoslovakia, where we had some interested folks in Prague we met No, no, we met in Pilsen. So yeah, it's Norway, I've been to the Norway reunion and provided ministry there. So

it's been I don't know. It's been a fairytale life. I mean, how, how could a person complain?

Carla Long 28:04

Sandee, I just have to say, I mean, I worked with you Just for a year, a year and a half when I was in Europe and just to see how I mean, this is gonna sound really crazy, but how you've changed in your, how you've grown and being there. Can you talk a little bit about that? how you see the world differently now? Maybe? Oh,

Sandee Gamet 28:27

Yeah, I think I think people that have met known me before have seen a change more than I recognize in myself. But just to appreciate the cultural differences, how the church is slightly different in the areas because of culture, but also because of how the church came to be and how it was sort of established in those areas. The traditions that are part of Those gatherings that are unique. But I think what, there's also a negative side that hurts my heart. And that's the lack of materials. When I was in the States, I could have access to everything. And it was in my language and it was available to me. And here, if I want a new resource that the church has put out, it has to be translated into German or into Dutch automatically comes in French and Spanish, but German and Dutch are the two languages that I work most consistently in and I am just so aware of the challenges of trying to bring the 21st century church to focus Hear when the materials aren't readily available, but have to be translated, if there's something new that comes to us and the kind of pressure that puts on those who have those translation capacities to, to make those materials available, and one of those just happened last weekend. So I'm, I need to prepare the Kassel congregation. I won't be there forever, but they also need to be developing their own leadership and what priesthood might develop in this congregation. So we met for a retreat for a weekend and studied the material, the temple school material introduction to priesthood ministry. It had to be entirely translated into German for this weekend. And yeah, I recognize the two Challenges of languages in other places that in order to have materials available so they can grow with the church. That's my little soapbox for the day.

Carla Long 31:14

No, that's a good soapbox. It's I I do you think that people in English speakers in the church don't really recognize those hardships? I mean, we certainly don't recognize those hardships. And I appreciate you bringing that up a lot. Thank you. So, I also I don't want to miss this opportunity. So you've mentioned just a little bit what's happening in the Belgium church. And that's kind of exciting. There's some things that are moving there. We're going to talk to Elray and Joey about that pretty soon. And how do you say his a myth? Oh, a myth. Oh, yeah. We're going to talk to him pretty soon, hopefully on a podcast. But Kenny, from your perspective, can you talk a little bit about the Belgium church and what's happened in there?

Sandee Gamet 32:01

Well yeah, I've been there a couple of times now. And so it's been exciting meeting them and seeing them grow. And in, in the church, understanding the church and being in community with each other. And drawing in, in others, it's it's a large number of them are from members are from the Congo. And so they've been refugees in Belgium. So it's so also experiencing that culture. So the first time I was there, the first weekend that I spent there Kahealani had already come and had established living space and where the group also meets. And so that Sunday afternoon, the whole group got together and they knew about and so it was visiting time and we visited oh I don't know three, four different places throughout Brussels. And the singing family grieving from a loss of a relative. So going in and being present for a grieving family and the singing that occurs and the ministry that happened and then visiting someone else who runs a, a store that's open and being part of a store that was selling things and also meeting people who are coming in. So it was just quite an amazing experience. And a lot of them speak English as one of the languages that would have they have encountered over the places that they've lived. Not all of them come directly from Congo. They may go through Rwanda or Burundi in order to come and a number of them have left family behind and so are trying hard to be able to bring their family also to Belgium. Well, no, go ahead. Sorry. Then this. This last I was just there a couple weekends ago. And so now we're starting to teach my interpersonal peacebuilding training with them. And that's also just a wonderful, wonderful experience, and they just aren't they're so receptive to everything that you bring to them. And so, yeah, so it's really, it's really a treat and I love teaching that material. So I already had it in French because I had it translated it for French Polynesia, so I was ready to go to be able to share that part of of what I can bring with the congregation. I go back to the end of February to continue so

Carla Long 34:54

Oh, well, I mean, just seeing what is posted on Facebook by ca Hey Lonnie, and by Joey Sounds like it looks like a really vibrant group with some excellent singing and Oh, yes, the wonderful worships. Yeah,

Sandee Gamet 35:08

Yeah, that's very true. They're just yeah. And the group is, you know, growing. So depending on where they meet in Brussels, they may draw in a different group of people that's able to meet with them. So, yeah, and membership. Let's see, I think they've had 2, 3 baptisms at least.

Carla Long 35:37

That's pretty awesome. It is

Sandee Gamet 35:39

It is and but you know, what's really astounding about this, these are people who are well educated who, who have come from lives of being in jobs that have placed them in, in authority in some way and so on. We're talking about an amazing group of people who have come together and I it's exciting.

Carla Long 36:07

It is exciting. I love I just love hearing about it. So I don't I think this is gonna be a tough question for you to answer Sandee But no, no, you could do it. What what's been your favorite part of working in Europe?

Sandee Gamet 36:26

Oh, wow. Yeah, you're right.

Carla Long 36:29

Is it the food? Like for me? No, I just kidding. I love the people of course, but I really enjoyed the food too. I mean, you

Sandee Gamet 36:38

Well, when I travel through Europe, I eat my way through Europe.

Carla Long 36:42

Amen. Amen.

Sandee Gamet 36:44

So the food is good. I think what is my favorite thing? Oh my gosh.

I think it's just experiencing so many different places. And and connecting people into Church. I just love to, to say well, you know, someone so is in this country and, and and you might connect with them or but i think is the travel it's seeing all these different places and and making all these relationships probably is the highlight. I've been to places I never dreamed I would be

Carla Long 37:27

Absolutely Yeah, absolutely. I remember that you got to go to Greece and I was super jealous because I've always wanted to go to Greece.

Sandee Gamet 37:33

That's true. I got to go to Thessaloniki. And we're Paul walked. It's amazing. Now is amazing. Amazing.

Carla Long 37:45

Yeah, actually, when I was in Georgia, the country of Georgia I got to go to have supposedly the grave of St. Matthew. Now there's also four other places that say St. Matthew was there but I choose to believe it was in Georgia.

Sandee Gamet 38:00

Yeah, it's

Carla Long 38:02

Incredible what you get to see incredible what's out there, isn't it? It is, it is

Sandee Gamet 38:06

The world is is an amazing place. And I think most people leave the small but the town that they've always lived in and go to a place that that's not familiar outside of their own country, you see the world so differently and people so differently and, and it's a good thing. You know, it's, it's, there are wonderful places and people everywhere.

Carla Long 38:33

Absolutely. So Sandee, what comes next for you?

Sandee Gamet 38:39

Wow, that's a really good question.

Carla Long 38:41

Thanks.

Sandee Gamet 38:43

I don't know. And once the project with a Dutch hymnal is sort of the is the teller about whether how soon I will go back. So even the whether My My sense is at this point in time it could be early next year or by June of next year depending on how the how the hymnal comes along, but sometime in 2021 would be my, my sense. I will have been here five years. That's the time has been. I mean, I can't believe it's been five years. It just seems unbelievable to me. But I have a home back in Independence and you know, sooner or later I probably need to find my way back there. And actually retire I don't know.

Carla Long 39:41

I think that'll be a huge blow for the Europe church there. You're going to be super missed if and if and when you go back, but that's because I know what a big impact you've made on so many lives there. Thank you.

Sandee Gamet 39:55

That's very kind.

Carla Long 39:57

Well, Sandee, is there anything else that you wanted? To talk about that I didn't ask about

Sandee Gamet 40:03

No, I don't think so I think that I feel blessed that people have received me here. You know, it's one thing coming in loving being where you are. But it's also another thing about being accepted when you're an English speaking outsider to countries that don't, don't speak English. So I have, I have felt truly blessed that people have accepted me so openly.

Carla Long 40:37

Well, if I have any say in it, I feel like you're pretty easy to accept. You're pretty fun to be around. And thank you so much for being on the podcast and talking to us about what life is like for an American living in Europe working for the church. It's pretty awesome. Sandee, thank you so much.

Sandee Gamet 40:52

You're so welcome, Carla. Thank you.

Josh Mangelson 41:03

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