

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.

Joey Williams 0:34

So I want you to walk me through a slaughterhouse experience. So you guys have actually gone to the slaughterhouse. Walk me through that experience. Where did you go? What were the smells that you know, you mentioned with the vigil, chickens, the smell the sights, the connection? Yeah. What was happening in that place in that space? and What impact did it have on you?

Georgia Comins 1:01

So we have to go very early to go there really early because we live in cities. Generally speaking slaughterhouses don't don't like kind of just live around the corner in a city. So we have to get like several bosses and yeah, bumpy country roads and stuff to kind of get there. And so that was, you know, an experience in and of itself trying to get there. Um, in all honesty, it's a lot of sort of ups and downs throughout the whole thing, because it can be maybe it sounds like a psychopathic thing to say, but there are elements of it that can be nice, because you know, there's a lot of other fellow vegans there and you normally bring like snacks like I remember the people that we were at them with always brought like really nice, dark chocolate, biscuits, strawberries crisps and stuff. And yeah, and the trucks come pretty often, but there's still like, you know, significant periods of time where you're waiting for the next one to arrive where you're just kind of hanging out and talking with the people sort of there with you. Yeah, so then you know, but then when a truck does arrive, you know, it kind of gets pulled over and stopped. And you sort of then go up to it, and you, you know, you're looking at the animals you may have lots of people do different things. I've heard some people say a prayer for the animal that, you know, sometimes people, you know, livestream it to that social media so that people can see what's happening and things, take pictures of the animals. And sometimes something that I did a few times was just to kind of try and be present with the animal. So maybe like film and take some pictures of some of them, but also then just spend time with just sort of one individual chick looking at in the eye and focusing on seeing it as an individual. Sometimes you can, if they're a bit, you know, on easy and really sort of nervous and anxious sometimes you can like stroke those Through the cage, and they get, after a while, they sort of chill and they relax into it. And, you know, so many moving times I would be doing that and then and the chicken would start to go to sleep, and would, you know, lean into my hand. And I always found that more upsetting in a way because it was just like, you know, they're just so desperate for some affection. And that's when it really drives home to your how young these chickens are as well. They're babies, they might have the bodies of adults, but their babies in terms of their lifespan. So yeah, and then you have about two minutes of that. And and sometimes, you know, the drivers can be aggressive and stuff. But you know, there are instances where activists might be aggressive as well. You know, we never had that happen at the ones we were out but you

know, it does happen. It's a very emotionally charged situation. And then the truck goes in and it kind of disappears from view and for legal reasons. They don't like the vegans on sites in the actual, What is it called the bit where they actually support the animals? I can't remember I mean it's not that important anyway but you're not allowed into that actual bit is what I'm trying to say. And then sort of on average so it's maybe about 1015 minutes max and then it the truck comes out again like I showed in the webinar that's that's the most haunting part for me is because it's then it's just completely empty and silence and you know, it's dripping wet because it's been hastily hose down. And it has to be hosed down on health and safety because I'm not giving you the smell that comes from them trucks, it's foul. They defecate on top of each other. There's all kinds of horrible stench that comes from and on hot days as well during the summer. It's, it's horrible. And the ones that we went to all chicken slaughters, we haven't been to any ones for pigs or cows. They just weren't. They weren't while the slaughterhouses around those were sort of dealing with it was mainly chickens. But in my experience anyway, and from what I've heard other people And the chickens tend to sadly get abused even more if possible, because they're just easier to manhandle. You know, like, you can just pick up five or six of them in one go and kind of just throw them where you want them to go. Whereas, you know, you could not do that with a cow or a fully grown adult pig.

Joey Williams 5:18

Are slaughterhouses the same thing as factories? Is that the same space?

Ryan Comins 5:23

No, no, not not usually. And so generally, that's quite an important question, because not all of the animals that end up in the slaughterhouse come from factory farms, you have factory farms, where the animals will be born, and they will be kept there until that at the slaughtering age, and then there'll be driven. So chickens for instance, they'll be driven in these trucks with generally very large usually thousands of chickens on a single truck will then be driven to the slaughter house, where they'll be killed and you know, they spend no more than 15 minutes actually in this law of house. But it's an important distinction because sometimes people have the idea that organic or free range, animals have better lives, which which may well be true, but they end up in the same slaughter houses and the experience that is a is not nice.

Georgia Comins 6:20

No, I think because one that we were at one particular vigil, a couple of the activists did choose to, you know, risk their like, you know, a legal battle if you like, and they actually ran in alongside the truck and went in and we're live stream filming, you're in the kind of process of the chickens being unloaded. They were escorted out by police after about 10 minutes because often legally, they're not allowed to be there. On a almost unrelated point, so I'm sorry if this makes it difficult for people to follow, one thing I would like to draw your attention to that we noticed in particular, I noticed a big link between misogyny and slaughterhouses. In one company I'm thinking of in particular, that sort of slogan was, like a sort of play on words to do with them having the best chicks and the best breasts in town. And I remember I was there. And I was just thinking, how surreal it was to be at this slaughter house, were the sort of owners out there who do speak English, were telling us, you know, you need to respect our

place, you need to respect our work, while they were not even showing respect towards human females. I know that still makes me really angry when I think about that moment today. I think that was one of the few times when I did experience genuine kind of anger towards the people that owned the slaughterhouse, because I just thought, I don't know do you even care about humans as well? And obviously, that's not all of them. I know, that's maybe just, you know, a particularly bad one. But I just remember that really annoyed me as a woman being there and being surrounded by the and then seeing chickens go into be slaughtered as well.

Ryan Comins 8:04

And it wasn't it wasn't just one play on words. They all love rabbits all around the slaughterhouses. They had all of these ponds around kind of chicks, breasts, things, things like that, which is very objectifying. Yeah. One thing that we have that we haven't quite mentioned about the experience of slaughterhouses what it sounds like, and that was very powerful to me, is that it's actually it's very silent. Most of it most of the time that definitely quiet. And even when the trucks pull in the chickens are so subdued, and not not every time actually, one of the ones we went to, they were more agitated. And and so they were moving around a lot, and that was kind of scrambling. But I remember the first one that we went to, I was just shocked by how they were just sitting there. Some of them had passed out. Some of them are already dead by the time they arrived. And there was just no silence, except very occasionally you would hear them cheeping because something that a lot of people don't realize is that typically especially factory farmed chickens, which are the majority of chicken meat comes from, they slaughtered about five weeks old. So they've been, they've been bred to grow the bodies of adult adult chickens very, very quickly to the point where they can't support their own weights. And yet, they're still just just chicks. And so you just hit them cheeping very softly. And it's a very haunting experience, just the sound of it.

Joey Williams 9:21

I can imagine that horrible sound, but also the silence has to be very creepy, as well, as you're experiencing just kind of this moment of, this is where we are. And this is what we're doing here.

Georgia Comins 9:33

Yeah.

Joey Williams 9:34

So let's go back then, to where many of these animals would come from would be in these factories. And you talked a lot in the webinar about these being unhealthy environments. And I'll mention a few things. You talked about them being bad for workers in these factories, that there's lots of accidents that happen that are reported and probably many that are unreported. And then as well as some of the mental health aspects for the workers. He talked about the communities that surround these factories, suffering pollution of their water, their dumping sites, and probably a lot of horrible smells as well to go along with that and other health problems and issues, and especially the structural racism that's built into these systems. You talked about the zoonotic diseases and in Coronavirus, you know, the jury's still out of whether

that was actually something from one of these factories, but certainly bird flu and swine flu have all been attributed to these factory working conditions. Then you talked about climate change as well, and the different effects of the different gas emissions on our global environment. And we could spend an entire podcast on each one of these items, but I'd really like to just give you a little more time for people who have seen the webinar or not seeing the webinar, just spend a little more time on this idea of how what is on our plates might be contributing to racial exploitation and the heavy health consequences on low income families and poor neighborhoods.

Ryan Comins 11:09

So there's definitely structural racism embedded into our food system as there is, is inbuilt into virtually all of our systems. So Welford Emanuel Jones, who was the first Black farmer in Britain, said, when I go to some of these big food companies, it's like going into a white enclave, how can you be in a city that's so diverse, and then you go into the nearest rural area where you don't spot a Black person. And if there is a Black person, that'll be the cleaner or the security guard. So part of the reason why this structural racism exists is that on the one hand, the land the agricultural land, is generally owned by white farmers, or it's owned by corporations that have white owners and white CEOs. However much of the manual labor and much of the most difficult jobs is performed by low paid Black of people or indigenous people or people of color. So this is certainly the case in the US. It's also the case in Europe. So for example, in Spain, migrant workers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, they work under exploitative housing and labor conditions to produce food for predominantly white consumers. So there's that aspect of structural racism, inbuilt there. Now, racial injustice is in the food system and not limited to the animal agriculture industry. It all takes place across the production of all food, and indeed, through our entire economy. But in intensive animal farming, there's this extra layer that comes in, which has to do with the way that the waste is disposed off. So in the United States, especially, there's a major problem with industrial pig farming particularly. So the feces the urine, and the blood from large scale slaughterhouses. All of our waste tends to be dumped in open air cesspools, which are called the lagoons. Located predominantly almost exclusively in poor neighborhoods, and especially in communities of color and Black neighborhoods, here in Europe as well. The animal agriculture industry has its own problems with with sort of racial injustice and the disposal of animal waste, specifically against Romani and traveller communities in Europe. So, for example, in Slovakia slaughterhouses, meat processing plants produce large amounts of waste, which are then disposed of and dumped in unfenced areas in locations which are frequented by Romani people and by traveler people. So when this happens when the waste is disposed of in these communities, it poses a massive danger to the public health of these local communities. Because it pollutes the local air, the local water supplies, the local land is increased risk of zoonotic diseases they, like you mentioned before, things like bird flu, swine flu, for example. And yet, white people largely unaware of these problems because they're not in areas that not the waste isn't disposed off. And so it's out of sight out of mind. And that's why I think it ties in going back to those principles we mentioned the beginning about knowledge and awareness is that a lot of us just aren't aware of these issues, because they're not our lived experiences if we have white privilege.

Joey Williams 14:18

I was impressed during the webinar, how you talk about the numbers, the sheer number of animals that are being slaughtered each year. And so I'm gonna do a little test with you right now, see if you remember your own presentation. But you said 70 billion animals are being slaughtered each year. And you said this in such an amazing way by comparing it to human populations. So you said that 70 billion is about nine times of the human population on Earth right now. And then you talked about 300 plus million cows, which you said was the population of

Ryan Comins 14:54
USA.

Joey Williams 14:56
Good job. Yeah.

You talked about 1.5 billion pigs being slaughtered each year, which is approximately the population of

Ryan Comins 15:05
China.

Joey Williams 15:06
Yeah. Good job, you guys. But then I noticed that you humanize them by talking about how pigs exhibit some of the same traits and feelings of dogs and even small children are young children, and how chickens are complex and share cognitive abilities of math and counting, but also share emotional traits, such as the ability to experience boredom, frustration and even happiness. And I couldn't help but at some point, think about the declaration of independence in the USA, where it says We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And these are beautiful words, but we even know that these rights were not being applied to African Americans till at least 1964. And there's still some question whether this is being applied appropriately to people in the USA or even outside of the USA. Does something like the Declaration of Independence or a Declaration of Human Rights exist for animals? Is there an animal's declaration of animal rights? For example, do animals have unalienable rights? And if so, what would this be?

Georgia Comins 16:27
The short answer is in practice, no.

Ryan Comins 16:31
Yeah.

Georgia Comins 16:32

In theory, there are I know, but you know, in practice, whether they actually get taken into account,

Ryan Comins 16:39

Yeah, certainly there aren't any. It doesn't seem on the ground. But if they have in a liberal rights, they certainly aren't respected. A few years ago, there were a group of animal rights activists who did try to draft sort of a declaration of animal rights that was actually modeled on the Declaration of Independence and the opening line said something along the lines of, we hold these truths to be self evident that all beings are, or have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of their happiness. Something that I find quite interesting as well, though, and that I only learned about recently is that there is a proposed Universal Declaration on animal welfare that has been proposed to be adopted by the United Nations. And so that gives kind of a list of rights that animals have that deserve to be respected by all all human nations. And the bar is set so low, that's the first thing that hit me when I was reading it. So the first one, to be recognized as living and sentient beings. So that's the first that's the first thing because I you think that would go be taken for granted, but it's not there was a debate in our Parliament a few years ago about whether animals should be recognized legally as sentient beings. And it's not a scientific debate scientifically, it's absolutely clear that animals experience pleasure and pain that they are conscious, but they,

Georgia Comins 17:58

You don't even need science to do that. They're alive. I've never even understood why people feel the need to have, like, if you tread on a dog or a cow's for and they're gonna react, obviously, they're alive and experienced pain. I know, but there's scientifically there's a lot more to it in that way. But for me, I feel like come on, if we know that it experiences pain, and it has a response to that short and that's enough in some ways.

Ryan Comins 18:20

Absolutely. So that's just because of sort of the baseline should be recognized as beings who are conscious subjects of their own lives, so independent of their usefulness to us that they have their own lives which matter to them to them as individuals. This Declaration on animal welfare has been proposed also deserve to have their own interests considered and respected, the right to good physical and psychological health and well being. And then it lists five freedoms that animals have the right to when they're dependent on us. And so the first is freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from physical thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease and freedom to express their normal patterns of behavior. And just echoing what what Georgia said just now, I would say none of those rights are respected in current agricultural practices at all. So I mean, I think when we talk about animal rights, it can be off putting to some people because, you know, there are some human rights that are obviously specific to humans, you know, we're not going to give a dog the right to vote or say that a crocodile should have the right to an education or something like that. But I think, to me, it's a self evident truth that animals do share some of these basic and fundamental rights with us, especially as we've learned more about the level of consciousness and intelligence that these animals possess. They're so comparable and similar

to humans in so many respects, as though there are differences between the animal species but in our sort of basic ability to experience suffering and to experience pain and in our desire to live in that respect. Animals are equals.

Joey Williams 20:03

There seems to be some type of hierarchy in the mistreatment of animals. It seems to be easier to mistreat a chicken than a cow simply because of the cow size and strength. And this seems to be typical with humans as well. It's often the most vulnerable, who suffer victimization and physical and psychological abuses. Do you think that some of the same issues of power and control are also at play when it comes to the treatment or consumption of animals?

Ryan Comins 20:32

I think so definitely. There's a famous quotation, and it's been attributed to Gandhi. I can't verify that but it has been around for a while, that says, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way animals are treated." And I think that's I think that's very true because animals really are the most vulnerable and the most powerless of all beings in a human dominated world in a lot of ways I think that position in society is quite similar to newborn babies because like newborn babies, they can't even communicate using our human language to us. So they're totally at our mercy for us to to inflict enormous suffering on them. And so I think the way that we treat or mistreat animals, as society says a lot about us and the moral character, and especially, it says a lot about our attitudes towards those who are more vulnerable or less powerful than us.

Joey Williams 21:30

Yeah. Let's talk about some specifics about food. So for example, eggs, and vegetarianism. Is it okay,

Ryan Comins 21:42

Like we said at the beginning, I think it's better to emphasize sort of principles rather than strict rules. The key is kind of knowledge and education. And so, we do know that eggs are in comparison to some other animal foods. Eggs don't have as much of an environmental impacts, but there is a lot of cruelty that goes into the egg industry and I think it's misleading to pretend that it isn't. And this actually was a large part of why I didn't go vegan for so long was because I didn't know about a lot of this. So I went vegetarian because I thought, well, you know, I don't want an animal to die for me. And but the way I thought I was like, I mean, an animal doesn't care if I eat his eggs, like they're just gonna get laid anyway. And I, I'm sure the animal would be fine. Just you know, eating an egg. I didn't understand anything really about the egg industry and how it is produced. So the majority of eggs come from chickens from hens who are kept in battery cages, things are getting better in certain countries. But it's still the case that the majority of eggs come from hens which are kept in these tiny tiny cages and virtually their entire lives. And even hens who aren't kept in those cages in all egg farming systems, male chicks are killed within a day or two of being born because they use this to the egg industry. A lot of people don't notice and I didn't either for a long time, generally chickens are bred either for meat so that broiler chickens, in which case that's actually agenda is irrelevant. But then

separately you have chickens were bred for eggs. And obviously those male chicks are completely useless to the egg industry that they just killed within a day or two that being born.

Georgia Comins 23:21

Yeah, it's like a conveyor belt when normally like they will be hatched, they'll come out and this still if you I mean like if anyone nobody wants to see it but you know, if you don't believe it kind of you know, there's footage of it. And they come out of the shells and the shells are literally still with them next month conveyor belt, and it just goes along and drops them into an industrial grinder and they're ground up alive and and I've, you know, I've seen it and it was, it was very hard and horrible to watch. But one thing I will say is how quick it just turns into a kind of consistency on that belt that honestly resembles that You get chicken nuggets from McDonald's. And I don't say that to try and you know, detract from the horror of what goes on in there. But I think, you know, it does raise questions as well of, you know, where is that ground up male chick? Kind of I don't even know what you'd call it substance? Concoction? Where is that being used? Because I don't know, maybe this is my little conspiracy tinfoil hat thing here. But you know, I don't think for a minute that they don't sell it, or try and make some kind of profit off of it. And I think that, you know, that probably is what forms the basis, at least in part for a lot of kind of cheap meats, maybe in pet food or in fast food chains, you know, all of this kind of thing. So there's, yeah, there's so much that goes on in the egg industry that, you know, we're not aware of, I remember that was one of the most horrifying things that I learned. It's a similar. It's a pattern throughout all the RMR culture industry, I think, is that a lot of the male young offspring are just kind of blown away by In very cool ways, because and then soldiers cheat me because well, they're not as needed as the female one. And don't get me wrong, the life of the female animal is arguably worse. I mean, if you're a dairy cow, your life is to be forcefully impregnated, you know, it doesn't happen a natural kind of way. There's not in factory farms, there's not cows in the fields that may, you know, that are artificially inseminated by a farmer, you know, shoving their hundred female cows vagina, and that happens several times. And then the baby cow was taken away from her within hours often have given birth to it. Because, you know, we, we want the milk. You know, cows aren't different to all the mammals, they produce milk for their offspring. They don't just produce it all the time. And yet, that's something that I believed when I was younger was just that, you know, they just cows make milk. They're milk machines. It's like, no, they're a mammal, you know, they make milk for the young. I know that's ended up detracting away from the idea of a hierarchy. But yeah, I just thought was important to mention that about the industry and that we don't see in a lot of products.

Joey Williams 26:07

Well, I think it's a very important observation that mistreatment happens at all levels. And it's just a matter of which industry Do you want to look out and we can figure out what the issues are. I found it really interesting to listen to this webinar and also to be talking to you right now about this. In our podcast, I would have never had this answer for eggs, for example. And now I have ways to talk about some of the problems that are still happening in factories and how that plays out with for example, eggs. So let's talk about seafood and a plant based diet. That was one of the questions from our webinar.

Georgia Comins 26:49

Yeah, I also just wanted to mention real quick about the end because as well, is hopefully that you know, they are currently thanks to the work of a lot of activists that have exposed this core practice in the egg industry, there is technology being developed, I think mainly in Belgium and Germany, to sort out with the sex of the chick that will be hatched before it is hatched, so that it won't mean that we will have live animals being grown up alive. And for that reason, I know that France at least before COVID, I don't know whether it's still stands. I had made a pledge that I think by 2021, they were going to end the mass killing of male chicks, wasn't it? I don't know whether that will still happen. But you know, if that does happen, I don't know maybe the conversation about eggs will change again. But I think it is a mark of how important this kind of work and activism is that it, it has changed the way and people you know, are becoming more aware and because of this of people turn that around to the industry and say and that's not okay. This technology for the first time is being considered and people are trying to develop it, which Yeah, sorry, I just I know we're talking about seafood. I just want to mention that.

Joey Williams 27:58

Yeah, so the question was about seafood and in seafood Okay, on a plant based diet and I think Georgia you responded to that in the question and answer time after the webinar. Do you want to respond again to that for this podcast?

Georgia Comins 28:13

Yeah, sure. Um, I mean, people have very different opinions on seafood because not all seafood is created equal as well, in a way. I mean, seafood can involve dolphins and sharks and, you know, big fish that, you know, definitely are sentience and have emotions and think and feel and experience pain and stuff. But then within that there's also the case of bivalves and like types of shellfish, like oysters and mussels and things like this, which, under the current sort of scientific understanding, it's believed that they're not sentience, at least anyway. So I mean, you'll get different answers from different kinds of plant based advocates as to whether they can be included in even a strict vegan diet and stuff. I think they're really gross personally, I think tried them before and I'm not a fan. But I definitely you know, think it's something that's really good to consider, especially if you are concerned about nutrition and you know about going 100% vegan and stuff, say, in terms of seafood more generally, again, it's such an individual thing, I always hesitate to give out kind of a strict kind of thing on that we're very sort of cagey about doing that, I think, has probably been made clear. But I think it's just worth remembering that the idea of being plant based specifically just means that you're based predominantly on plants, it's, you know, it's kind of in the name. If you will, having seafood very, very, very occasionally, you can still say that you're plant base, no and lots of people do. And, again, I think it's going to be a personal choice kind of thing. I personally, believe that obviously fish and you know, sea life in that way has has sentience and therefore has worth and should be able to live out its life, especially because of their importance in the cleanliness and suffering. The ocean is where all the important role they have there. But yeah, like, you know, technically can be included as part of a plant based diet. And in terms of environmental issues, it's definitely a lot better source of protein than, you know, chicken or actually red meat and

stuff. It's a much better source of animal based protein. But then, you know, it's such a complicated issue, because as I'm saying that, you know, there's so many things that come to mind, like, the plastic from fishing nets, and all the by kill of animals like dolphins and whales, and, you know, yeah, like, it's such a complicated issue. And I mean, you know, I've just been saying about shellfish, but even with that, you know, they have an important role in the ocean, and which is, you know, the bottom food and on a lot of them, like they help to clean and purify the ocean and stuff and manage the levels of oxygen and all kinds down there. So, if we, you know, if we start overly reliant on them, we're just going to end up in the same situation. So It really is just something where I don't think there is an easy answer. I think that's why we prefer the more sort of principles sort of approach like we keep saying this. And I will probably sound like a broken record. But just because I don't think there's a one size fits all approach to diet, and I don't think we can say, well, this one is less harmful, and that one is super harmful. You know, it's just, it's all very different and often, yeah.

Joey Williams 31:23

Yeah, it is interesting, how quick, it becomes complex. And one of those questions of complexity is about science. So what about genetically modified foods? Tell us about that, especially in relationship to a plant based diet? Are there any concerns people should have about genetically modified foods?

Georgia Comins 31:47

I just talked everyone's ear off about fish. Maybe you want to go there?

Ryan Comins 31:52

So, I think genetically modified foods are a very divisive topic. That's the first thing that I want to acknowledge. Is that different are very different opinions about it. Even different scientists have very different opinions about it as well. As far as I can tell, there's not really a, an overwhelming consensus among scientists, because the relationship between food and the environment is very complex. And there's multiple factors to consider. So that's the first thing I'd want to acknowledge is that it's very divisive issue. And partly for that reason, I'm I'm always a little bit hesitant to say, either that, you know, genetically modified foods and 100% fine, and you need to eat genetically modified foods on a plant based diet. But I'm also very hesitant to say that if you're going to be plant based, then you need to only organic fruits and vegetables and things like that, because of my worry is that then that can lead to becoming even more restrictive. And, and unless I spoke about before about sort of self care, I think that can be quite a dangerous sort of road to go down.

Georgia Comins 32:50

There's different levels of as well, I mean, something that I touched on in the q&a after the webinar is that I think that genetically modified can mean so many different things. You know, you can be referring to tomatoes that have been modified to increase or decrease the amount of seeds in them, to make them you know, have a better yield or to need less pesticides and stuff. But you can also be talking about modified sugars and corn syrups. and stuff and colors have been used to be added into candy or like, you know, ready meals and stuff. Like I don't

think there's a clear answer, because genetically modified can be so many different things. And especially in terms of the fruits and vegetables, you know, sorry to bring class into it again, but it's just, it's, if you're already asking people to, you know, buy from this source and undo that, and also avoid meat and then do this. And then also you need to buy organic fruits and vegetables and beans and stuff. Like I said, we tried it a couple of times, and it like nearly tripled our shopping bill. You know, and where, you know, we don't struggle even but you know, if you are someone that is living in a very vulnerable situation and is dependent upon benefits or things like this, that's going to be nearly impossible for you to afford to do all of that, so I think it I just think it's too divisive ever topic, really. Yeah.

Ryan Comins 34:15

I think too complex of a topic as well to give us a simple, straightforward, good or bad characterization, that there are, I mean, are they concerned with with mono cropping and some forms of genetic modification? Absolutely. But also, there can be benefits to selectively breed breeding crops to ensure that they are, you know, more resistant to insects or that they have a bigger yield, which means that you can feed people more efficiently. So I think there's advantages and disadvantages. And in either case, you know, you can be plant based and not eat any genetically modified crops if you want to, and if you're concerned about them, but in the same breath, you don't have to avoid GM food. If you want to be pompous.

Joey Williams 34:59

We've talked about this as being a divisive topic. And I think that food in general and what we eat can be very divisive when we're talking with other people in our own families and our community, especially in our socio political associations that we have with, with people around us and in the world and on many political agendas as well. One of the things I really love about both of you is your ability to be convicted of veganism and even insistent when necessary, but you're both very conscious that not everyone may be where you are in your culinary journey, and with your animal rights journey, has this always been your position or take time to get there? And then I'd like you to reflect a little bit on Apostle Paul's words, where basically he says that the foods that we eat shouldn't divide us. The fellowship should not be divided by the different things that are on our plates, and how would you What would you respond to that council given by Paul?

Georgia Comins 36:05

Personally, something that I find interesting about that council is that I think that, in a way, providing a plant based meal can be a way of making it very non divisive, and not dividing a fellowship. And, you know, there's so many people from different backgrounds and cultures, with food restrictions. And, you know, maybe you can touch on this a little bit because you know, more about it than I do being, you know, Aryan and stuff, but to my knowledge, there's not really any sort of religious or cultural kind of strictures against like, you know, saying like, beans and fruits and vegetables and stuff. So I think in many ways, if we're thinking of how we can, you know, make our dinner table and our plates you know, peace and affirming and, you know, bringing people together, it can be a really good way to avoid those kind of battles in a way is to focus kind of those plant based whole foods, you don't have to get into things to do

with kosher and all and things like that it it kind of, I don't want to say negates it because that would be reducing the whole cultural history and background to do with food just massively, but I think it definitely mitigates at least a lot, you know, if that's the kind of focus of the meal.

Ryan Comins 37:23

Yeah, I agree with that. Because a lot of interfaith meals that I have seen advertised and things like very often they will explicitly make it vegan, because it's the easiest way to ensure that it's inclusive and welcoming to everybody. And, and so yeah, I think that's a really good point about how foods can actually be uniting rather than divisive, and how plant based food especially has that potential. Other thing with with that particular passage from from Paul and Romans, I remember right he's speaking about meat that's been sacrificed to idols on the division in the Christian Church and early Christian Church around whether it was okay to eat that type of meat or not. His personal opinion I got, if I remember right is that it doesn't, it doesn't really matter that much everything is clean, but also be respectful of each other's food choices. I do think that the kind of conversation that we're having is slightly different because what Paul is talking about, there aren't really any major ethical implications to it as to whether it's been, you know, sacrificing a religious ceremony or not, there are major ethical implications with the current way that we eat. So I do think it is important to be bold and to be open and to be honest about having those conversations even when they're uncomfortable. And even if they cause very, very strong opinions to be had. But I think we also do we also need to affirm what we have in common and sort of shared values. And I think a major part of that is just dialogue. And I think one of the major areas where activists sometimes run into problems is that we're sometimes very eager to talk and to under sort of speak the truth that we found out. And we forget to listen to what the other person is saying and to where they're coming from and what their experiences. And I think just listening to what somebody is saying, listening to where they're at, and affirming that and recognizing that, that that that is their experience can provide a good foundation for a relationship, and nurturing those relationships, which then mean that those conversations can be had in a way that's less divisive, and causes less, less, fewer problems.

Joey Williams 39:30

I know that listening for me before I moved to England, I had to decide where I wanted to move and I listened to many different ideas of places that would be good. And I eventually chose Leicester because of its great diversity, especially it has the southern Asian influence in Leicester and one of the things that I listened to was people talking about different diets and when I would have guests from different faiths or from different faith movements, that it might be important to offer a vegetarian at least if not vegan option so that everyone could be included, everyone could have a place around the table. So, your webinar ended with some easy steps that we could take. Would you mind mentioning again, what those steps were? And for anyone listening to this podcast who might not have caught the webinar?

Georgia Comins 40:29

Yes, well, first one was to check your labels, basically read and have a honest sort of look and conversation with yourself all the people you live with, about how dependent we truly are on

animal products. You know, like, where are the sort of sneaky ingredients? Because you might think, well, I only eat meat once or twice a week. It's not that bad. But if you look on soups and sauces, you know, it's milk, eggs is a bit here and then you start to see a picture emerging as well, like there's so much actually in my diet that I'm not even aware of. And that awareness I think is good. Regardless of what you choose to do with it, just just having that awareness is so important because, you know, it comes down to the self care thing of taking care of yourself and that kind of intention of what you eat and I would argue that's a good practice mentally regardless of how you choose to eat. And then there was also try and plant based alternatives. You know, kind of having fun with that linear time as we do now, where in most countries anyway, most places, there are so many alternatives and more coming out all the time. Yeah, there's, there's so many things as well that are actually accidentally vegan or plant based, you know. My personal favorite is Chilli Heatwave Doritos. Those are really nice. And then there was also supporting Black owned businesses and products as a way to try and combat a lot of the racism and cultural appropriation that goes on in packaging and just in the food industry in general. You know, giving back to those communities and going with them directly rather than, you know, going through some big corporate white own kind of business as appropriated traditional sort of recipes and things, you know, in a racist manner. And then also was to if you feel like you can't is to consider going plant based or fully vegan and kind of in line with that learning more about nutrition, and maybe considering attending a local slaughterhouse vigil yourself to kind of get involved with that element as well.

Joey Williams 42:28

How would you encourage people to get involved? Is there any type of event that people need to be aware of is there any special date that people need to keep in mind or a step that someone can take right now to get involved?

Ryan Comins 42:41

Coming up in less than three months, is World Vegan Day.

Georgia Comins 42:48

Yeah.

Ryan Comins 42:49

Which I believe is on the first November. So if you if anybody is interested in trying to be vegan, it might be for a day. If the thought going vegan or eating plant based food is really scary to you maybe just try on that day and have that as a day where you say, I'll try not to eat any animal products this day and just do an experiment and see how easy do you find it? How difficult Do you find it? And, and that's an opportunity to reflect on or it might be if you're more kind of firmly committed and you think, yeah, I actually I want to make this transition completely, then that might be that might be a good day to aim to aim for. Because often around that time, it can make it a bit easier because companies sometimes bring out extra bring out more vegan products around that time. So that's one possibility. Another really good time to consider changing your diet up a little bit is in January or Veganuary, as it's called sometimes. So is it spelt like January but with vegan instead of the J A N and if you type that that word Veganuary

into social media, I believe they probably have a website as well. They're just really good at giving you loads of tips and advice for people who are complete newcomers to veganism, and who might only be trying out for a month. So some people decide, okay, for this month, I'm just going to try and be plant based and see how I find it. It also also, again, coincides with often companies supermarket, bring out more plant based foods and also often have offers and reductions in the prices of plant based foods. So it's a great time to just experiment and try new things and see how you find it.

Georgia Comins 44:33

Yeah, another good one as well is you know, if you are particularly interested in you know, attending a vigil or something, it's the Save Movement, isn't it? If you search on like, you know, Facebook, just for that, and then the name of you know, your area, or like, you know, slaughterhouse vigil near me, there'll be a lot of options that will come up with if you do feel like you can do something like that. That's also maybe a bit dodgy, maybe a little bit of a plug, but I, I do have a YouTube channel that I want to start posting recipes on. So if you want to see some really cheap vegan recipes that are thrown together in student kitchen style,

Joey Williams 45:14

How do we access that?

Georgia Comins 45:16

I think it's just my name actually. Yeah, just my name Georgia Comins.

Joey Williams 45:21

Yeah. Okay, we can find that on YouTube. Guys, is there anything else that we would need to talk about today? I think we've talked about so many different things, such an informative session, but is there anything that you wanted to make sure to mention before we come to the end of this podcast?

Georgia Comins 45:44

I think we covered it.

Ryan Comins 45:45

I think we have about covered we've covered everything. I mean, with each of these issues, we could spend a whole podcast on each sub topic and each sub, any sort of sub issue, but I think we've given sort of explored a whole range of issues surrounding animal agriculture.

We sure have. And I only have one more question before we end today, because food and gathering around food is so important in Community of Christ. And we have these things called potlucks. And you guys have mentioned several times in this podcast already snacks that you love to gather and and form community through the vegan and vegetarian community through snack. So tell me, if you were to come to a Community of Christ potluck and it was a plant based potluck, what would be some of the exciting things that you might see offered on the table?

Georgia Comins 46:39
Something other than falafels

Joey Williams 46:44
The go to vegetarian vegan options.

Georgia Comins 46:47
Exactly. I feel like when I first went vegan, I liked them, but you know, I've just gotten so sick of them over the years because you know whenever I'd go to like an event, they'd be like it's okay, it's okay, we're gonna have vegan options and I'd get there and they'd be like have a falafel, like you know, and I'm grateful for it and obviously you know, I'd eat it but um, yeah, it can be a bit much if you've been having that like any kind of get together for like five years straight.

Ryan Comins 47:18
Something that I, I would hope and expect to see a lot of just simple meals that can be turned that can be made plant based so easily. So there is such a variety of vegan soups that you can make a plant based soup. So, there's lentil soup, you know, curry coriander, just so many different types, you can, you know, obviously put so many different ingredients into it. But also Chili's,

Georgia Comins 47:41
I was gonna say chili, like a nice bean chili soup with some hummus or like vegan cheese on the top. I'm really passionate about soup.

Ryan Comins 47:55
But so many others as well I think I'm always the reason I'm almost five difficult to think is just the virtually any meal that you think of that you enjoy. If you type into Google, and they say, if you really like spaghetti bolognaise you could just type in vegan spaghetti bolognese recipe and and you'll come up with a whole list of different different recipes and ideas. So honestly, I would expect and hope to see a lot of the same foods that are at a usual Community of Christ potluck, just without the animals.

Georgia Comins 48:25
Yeah.

Joey Williams 48:27
Well, Georgia and Ryan, thank you both so much for being a part of this follow up podcast for the 2020 European Peace Colloquy Webinar Series. Thank you for your time and for your important reflections on non-violence and what we put on our plates as we continue to move towards becoming a more peaceful humanity. And thank you to all of our listeners. Join us next time to listen to Ellis Brooks share about "Making Soldiers Out of Children Military Recruitment and Our Youth". And asking the question or answering the question, is there space for peace in our schools, as we all continue to explore together are many different Grounds for Peace.

Josh Mangelson 49:22

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