

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.

Brittany Mangelson 0:33

Hello, everyone, welcome to Project Zion Podcast. I'm Brittany Mangelson. And I'm going to be your host for today's episode. This is going to be a What's Brewing episode, which is all about mission. So we're going to be talking with 70, Sean Langdon who works in the Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center. And, Sean, I always like to just have the guests introduce themselves because I feel like you all do much better than anything I could come up with, but I will ask you to respond to one quick question in your introduction. I'm curious, because I know that you're both a Taylor Swift Fan and The Chicks fan and they both have come out with new albums recently since this time of COVID. So I just want to know in your general introduction, can you share your favorite songs on both of those albums?

Sean Langdon 1:24

Oh my gosh, that's the toughest question of this interview and Gosh, uh, okay, so I am Sean Langdon yes, as has been mentioned, it's good to be back here. This is my third time being interviewed on Project Zion, I come from Springfield, Oregon, and like, was mentioned I work as a full time Minister for the greater Pacific Northwest USA mission Center, which is essentially Western and Central Oregon, Western and Central Washington and Alaska. I serve on our mission center leadership team with a specific focus on invitation ministries, which includes new expressions, which includes our online ministry, as well as youth and young adult ministries and our camping program we have three campgrounds of which I coordinate Youth and Family camps for in the summertime. So that's kind of briefly what I do here for the mission center as for the tough questions, so I am obsessed with Taylor Swift and Chicks fan, um, and saw both of them the last time they came to the northwest. The Chicks concert was like going to church. It was just great in the Taylor Swift concert we had like, third row from the top of the football stadium in Seattle and somebody from her crew came and said, Hey, you guys want floor seats and we were taken to six rows back center of the stage. And she was literally like 10 feet from us off and on throughout the concert performing and it was just amazing and full of energy. And sadly, but also amazingly, one of the best nights of my life. Um, but I would have to say there's a song on the new Taylor album called Exile, which is a duet with Bon Iver, and it is just absolutely beautiful and tanhaji and I just, I just absolutely love it. The chicks one is a little harder for me because I there's some obvious ones, March March, it's just a great protest anthem, but there's one called I posted on Facebook, Everyone Loves You. And it was just this, I think, is what it's called. It's just it's haunting song that about, you know, when you're kind of in an abusive relationship while nobody else can see what's going on, but you and you know, Does everyone loves you, everyone else love you when, you know I know what it is that you that you do and whatever and so just kind of that haunting I love songs about real life. And I serve with

you emotion and songs that have a message and a meaning that are more powerful than the song itself. And for me, The Chicks did it on that one. So answered that tough question, but

Brittany Mangelson 4:25

I'm so glad I asked that. And yes, I would agree on both of those songs. I think it's Exile is really good. And actually my little boy loves that song as well, so.

Sean Langdon 4:36

Oh, good. I will say that you should all of us to Tights On a Boat though, from The Chicks album because it's all, it's just hilarious. It's a good song. Anyways, they're all good. That's the problem.

Brittany Mangelson 4:48

I'm so glad I'm so glad we went there. So, Sean, yes, I don't think I mentioned exactly what we'd be talking about, but we're gonna be talking about online ministries since COVID. We have just been highlighting, unofficially, a few of the different opportunities that people are having to engage with online ministry over the church mostly, well, we have branched out to Europe now. But we're gonna be focusing in your Mission Center today. So before we dive into, I guess, post COVID online ministries, I'm wondering what online ministries look like before COVID. So I know that you work a lot with youth. So I'm wondering, you know, if there were apps, were there regular meetings online, just what did technology look like, as far as mission goes in your Mission Center before we were all bumped online?

Sean Langdon 5:38

Right, so we had a, you know, like, like many areas of the church Zoom had started to be used for a lot of meetings. And so we did, we would have, you know, our mission center leadership team meetings and staff meetings and the occasional meeting with pastors or other teams, but we really have not fully utilized online capabilities. In fact, we're saying to ourselves now like, how did we not think of this sooner? Why did it take a pandemic to realize the world of possibilities with online ministries, which we'll get into. And we had. So we had started focusing a lot on the expressions and our mission center are just starting to wrap our head around and process that about a year and a half ago, which led up to this big conference experience mission center conference last fall, where we were going to launch our newest brought new expressions initiative. And as part of that there was going to be a couple of initiatives that we were going to start as a mission center to help launch new expressions of community here. One of them was a ministry is a ministry that I lead for our LGBTQA+ plus community and allies, and the other was going to be an every other month online worship experience. We had our first one in February of which you were the the guest speaker for and we had intended not to have our next one until April, and then March happened. And so we But before that, that was all we pretty much did. We had not really explored online ministries with youth or with other specific populations or to the entire mission center and beyond, besides meetings. We never had never explored it really fully missionally we were just getting to dive into the whole online worship thing kind of modeling it after what some other areas, other areas in you know, Oklahoma and Inland West Mission Center, and some others had started doing as well.

Brittany Mangelson 7:46

It's good that you were starting to think of that and that you had, you know, one meeting under your belts and you had plans to do more, but kind of cute that you thought that you could just take the rest of March off.

Sean Langdon 7:58

Yeah, I mean, I think that there's this Definitely with something moving right within the church at that time because there are already some are already several online ministries happening either on a monthly or an every other month basis and and of course, you know, Community of Christ kind of any prophetically especially now, having online Communion go forward, just you know, a few months before all of this started to unfold. And so I think that there's definitely was the spirit was moving in a direction that was leading us to it. And we sense that in our area as well. But yeah, who knew what was to come?

Brittany Mangelson 8:34

Who knew? Exactly right. So COVID hits, and the entire church essentially moved to online. And I know that you all have just tried a lot of different things. As I've watched, you know, the Facebook events show up in my feed, I can just tell that there's been a lot of creativity, especially around reunion, but just start talking about what you all have done as far as mission center ministries since COVID hits.

Sean Langdon 9:07

So fast start with, you know, the beginning of it. We actually had the same weekend that the church kind of started shutting down for COVID precautions. I had a 70s ministry retreat plan for my mission center. And guess minister from world church coming out. So he was in the middle of flying out when everything was starting to shut down. And so I was like, What do we do? Do we continue this do we not we ended up having it as kind of our last official event, because he was already out here and we checked out with all the participants and said stay home if you don't feel comfortable. So we didn't have anything that first weekend but already the wheels were turning off work with, okay, if all of our congregations are being shut down and we have in our mission center over 30 congregations, you know, we need to what are what can we provide in terms of ministry to the entire mission center, what kind of worship ministry can we provide, knowing that we will we would have congregations that could possibly Do it and we found out later that they couldn't some Do you know many of ours conjugations do have only ministries, but I'll get to that. But we we just kind of started exploring how can we provide this ministry that every Sunday for you know, our folks that of course, well at first, of course it was we're gonna announce it for two weeks, and then maybe maybe two weeks this will be gone or congregations will be over by Palm Sunday. That was wishful thinking. Um, but we, the team that I had that was going to help with our every other month worship started then becoming kind of a listening board kind of a springboard for ideas and whatnot. But essentially, I took on this coordinator role of our Sunday worship. And so we started scheduling them out at first the first couple of weeks. And then that led to realization where we're definitely through the all of April and probably in May. And so we started scheduling some

more, you know, looking at different ways. We had our youth leader worship We had a testimony worship that through the amount of Scripture that different places on the amazing scripture and elements within that part of the journey to amass, we would stop and have a testimony that represented that part of the journey and just doing some different things with worship and of course speakers and you know, one of the blessings with movies online worship for the mission Center has been being able to bring in speakers from around the church that are our membership and friends would not have otherwise been exposed to. So it's allowed us to introduce the more wider diversity of what it means to be Community of Christ instead of just all of us in our own little bubbles in our congregations our mission center. But as soon as we started focusing on online workshops and realizing there was going to be other needs for support during this time, we immediately you know, somebody said I would just love a time to get on in and meet informally and visit and so then the idea for breakfast club came up and Breakfast Club meets every Monday, Thursday and Saturday night. Well, first it was Monday and Thursday. And then somebody said, Hey, I work during the week still, I'm an essential worker, but I have weekends off. Can we do what we can once you so we added Saturday, some people that participate without to have it every morning. But we had, you know, for me tonight, it's just can you get on you can bring your breakfast to the computer with you or a morning beverage and just visit and share and there's nothing planned. We don't have a script or anything like that. At the beginning, we had a question of the day that kind of fizzled out to just be in this natural flow. And people would say, you know, over time with Hey, you were doing this on that day or you weren't feeling well, how are you today and checking in and it just be has become its own little community and it's still going three days a week now, you know, all these months later. We also started what we call a faith information series, which is we're not gathering for Sunday school anymore. So what are some formational opportunities that we can provide Divide. And so that has been every Wednesday night, we have done that. And that is a more of a class type of discussion opportunity. Right now we're in the middle of a series that is looking at kind of FeO, TED talks with different religious leaders. And then we're discussing we're watching the video together and then discussing how does this but they say relate to Community of Christ identity, message, mission and beliefs as well. And how are they different or you know, whatever. And we've started doing that now from an interface perspective to throughout this class. So there's that as the weeks went on now, mid April, we realized, hey, you know, we have several people needing some temple school classes, the churches, kind of formational experience that'd be offer from headquarters perspective of, especially for those that are getting ready for ordination, priesthood, but open to everybody, of course, and all are encouraged to take them to become more aware of the fullness of ministry and Community of Christ. And so we started looking at what people needed and offering online courses as well. And we've done at least three so far. And we're getting ready to start a fourth one. And that's been very helpful because people have time now to take some of these courses that they need to get done, and that's provided a great ministry for those folks that have taken it and help them go deeper. We had in mid April, we had Spirit Week. So there was kind of this, you know, it was, I saw that a family and our mission center. Because the kids were not in school, the family decided that they were gonna have Spirit Week for their family so it can kind of feel a little bit normal for the kids. And so every day was something different. And I saw that on Facebook and Instagram, their pictures every day for their family. I was inspired, you know, that

would be a great thing for us to do that would involve all ages, but it would be kind of a nod Are our children in youth if we had our own spirit week, so we did for a week in April, from Monday to Sunday, we had everything from sock day to crazy hair day to these are my church clothes Sunday. And it was a great unifier for our mission center. People were posting pictures they were doing so in a way that was a little more vulnerable, posting wacky hair. Maybe they wouldn't have necessarily done that or been embarrassed to do that before. But it was great to see people be creative and join together and community in that way. Beginning You know, there in April, we realized that because people were so you know, it was jarring to go from this pace of everyday life to then all of a sudden having to stay indoors and distance and the potential of you getting sick and worried about the potential of know that you have family members that might get sick. And so we had and just knowing We had you know, there was this big focus on essential workers especially and what they were doing and sacrifice. So we ended up having an online vigil experience as well at the end of April. And that was just a really special evening. We had a team together of like five to seven people and to help plan that and we had videos of people sharing from different backgrounds. We had the mother of a graduate as who was also a teacher share. We had somebody who works for infectious disease unit for a hospital share. We had a police officer share, just a variety of us share just a variety of stories of this is how this is affecting my journey right now. And then they also at the end, we had them share clips of where they find hope, though, in the midst of all that, as well. It just was this beautiful, beautiful experience, to remember those who were experiencing loss Those who, whether it be physical, you know, death or other losses in life as well as to lift up each other in prayer, as we continue to unfold and again, our, our worships, you know, we started planning out a little bit longer and a little bit longer. And, you know, we realize, you know, we needed to start thinking about other people who want to bring we got Steve Veazey to come one Sunday. So we were super excited about that as the president of our church and, again, apostles, but also, we started looking at other church leaders who are maybe mission center presidents and areas that would not otherwise get to know people from like, the west coast to the east coast. And so we ended up you know, be able to bring in some other friends that we have Ryan Pitt, who's the mission center president, on the East Coast for the mission center out there and some, just some other areas like that, but I think it's important for people to just, like I said earlier, become exposed to a wider diversity of ministry, as well as our own members and friends of the mission center, who were able to provide ministry now at this different level. And so, you know, we're a mission center that because we are so large and we're spread out, because we have Alaska, which you have to hop over, you know, British Columbia to get to we, we only meet together once a year. And that's that mission center conference when we send delegates to Portland for a weekend conference. And so this has also been a great unifier for us to receive ministry from people, you know, for people in Alaska, to receive ministry every Sunday from people in Washington, Oregon, and for people in Washington, Oregon to receive ministry every Sunday from folks in Alaska, to having people join us from other missions centers. We have several from your mission center Inland West, who joins us every Sunday as well. And because of connections, family connections, or you know, campground connections or whatever, as well as other places, that church where people you know, they go into one worship They go on to another workshop, they just got to fill their Sunday morning with three or four workshops. And so we get a wide variety and which has been great. And some of those folks have actually

started then we've invited them to provide ministry and some of our workshops because we've gotten to know them and see them online. And so that's been a blessing. We had somebody say, Hey, can we have a talent show online, that would be a fun activity to have. And so we had, you know, in late May, we had a talent show where we people submitted most of them submitted videos of their talent, but we had kind of a bring your own ice cream to your computer, if I should, Sunday social type thing. And we had people share their talent. It was just a fun evening and we laughed. You know, during the pandemic, especially those early months, any opportunity to laugh was just, that's just healing for the soul. And those moments were probably more rare than common. And so it was just one of those evenings of we can just let our hair down and have fun and be somewhat normal with each other through that experience.

It was a we also then had a press I've had of a press service in May, to kick off the month and decided that that's something we wanted to do every month. So the first Wednesday of every month became prayer service as part of our faith information series as well. At the same time, as all this is going on for the mission center, we're examining how can we respond to the diversity of needs, recognizing that this is a lot that we're providing for the mission center, but that doesn't mean that everybody's expected to participate, right? We're trying to find different entry points for different people that have different needs. So yeah, there's people that participate in it all. But there's others that they really just need the relational aspect of Breakfast Club. Every week, they don't join faith formation, and maybe they'll even join every Sunday worship but that's, that's what they need. Some people need the stimulation of faith formation to help with their ongoing learning experience and just, you know, engaging their mind at this time. And so there's that. So that's always our are going to focus. But I've been really pleased to see how our congregations in the mission center have also responded to the call of what's going on and how they can provide ministry to their membership and their local areas as well. So we have several congregations that meet during the week, usually on a on a night, weekday night, or a weekend night of the week. A few will be one congregation that meets on Sunday mornings for worship before the mission center, so they do their worship, then they, most of them, come on and join us for the mission center worship. It's like my, I'll use my home congregation for example, here in Eugene, Oregon. They meet every Friday night pretty much. And at first it was just kind of a drop in say, Hello, let's stay connected, but then it was starting to get more creative. So then we had a night where we all submitted like our baby photos, and they put them on a PowerPoint and we had to guess who in the congregation that baby photo was for. And so that was just a fun experience. We did bingo one night online. And that was another fun we have another a congregation that has a bingo color for like a senior center or something like that and that his community and so he was able to use his gifts through that. And so it's just a variety of things that have happened. through online ministry, we have worships once a month with the congregation and I just see other congregations also find a way some are doing more learning experience. We have a congregation in the Seattle area that since the just north of Seattle, that when the whole you know after George Floyd's murder, and then the awareness of Black Lives Matter movement again, realizing that, you know, this needs to stay in the front of our consciousness and not just that, oh, wait till the next time something horrific happens. We need to continue to work on this. And I think that's been our failure as a society every time one of these tragic moments happen and, so we have a

congregation that has continued they every Thursday night they meet for as a congregation and a lot of their focus since then has been on learning and understanding and watching some videos together and reading, reading different material and discussing them and just trying to become as aware as possible of the journey of other people and what has led to this moment in time and so that's a great way for me like I you know, when I speak of Christian community and following in the footsteps of Jesus, like I think that's this congregation, you know, saying you need to focus on this and make this a priority for us. It's inspiring to me and you know, I've said to them I and a lot of ways I think that you have a way to kind of be the forefront for our mission center to help show us you know, how we're supposed to move forward and continue conversation for this. We had a young adults, we've had a young adult events only one so far but hoping for more we did Bingo Night, and the young adults absolutely loved it. And got, you know, the prizes of course, because you know, you always have to have something to bring, allure people in, and they can't be food right now. So we have prizes that we mailed out from Starbucks and Dutch Bros gift cards and whatnot. We also then started early on, actually, and I forgot to mention this part of with our youth group. Right away. We started an online youth group that was good that at the time started meeting weekly. There was again, you know, youth. We have a ministry called caravan. And it's a mission trip that happens in the summertime but they meet monthly during the school year, starting in January to prepare for that trip. All of a sudden, that came to an abrupt end after our March gathering. And so they were used to gathering once a month and we had others that were just needing connection and so we just started having youth group I asked them what they wanted to call it and they ended up with Holy Hangout, which I wass, uh, I thought it was cheesy at first, but it sounds like a name that an adult would give a youth ministry and they would be like, Wait, what? But they can help it on their own. And it's worked out great. And I you know, it's become a name that I really love for what we do. And so we meet we have, we were meeting every Tuesday night, and we would just have a guest of the week we would invite somebody from the mission center, usually somebody they would know from youth camp staff or something like that, or mission center leadership to come and just engage them in a question of the week. And so we would have a prayer and then a mixer question and then a special guest question of the week and then just informal sharing after that. I was approached by some people in Michigan in May to have a joint youth group of between them and asked and of course, there are three hours ahead of us. So we read on it on one of our normal Tuesdays that we would meet. And we decided that we would have to meet at 5:30. Because for them, that would be already 830. And so we needed to find a time that worked. But I was concerned that we would have that would be too early for our folks, for our kids. And so I bribed them by ordering pizza to each of their houses to be delivered, which was the most ridiculous thing that I probably done in youth ministries to try to coordinate, I will probably not do it again, because it was not fun. But they all got pizza delivered to their house. And so they thought it was like the best thing ever. And they joined in and we had a great youth group with Michigan that night, and youth, you know, kind of, you know, closing on the gap between youth and the church, from the east coast to the west coast. And, you know, and I had, you know, I was trying to deliver pizza to Canada, we have youth in our youth group that are because of our spectacular delegation for annual church camp at Graceland University for youth that are spectacular delegation includes British Columbia youth to come with us. And so they join us in our mission center youth group as well.

So it's trying to deliver to Canada but because they have different zip codes, I couldn't put in my zip code to order online to send to them. So luckily, those parents of those kids joined in and got pizza for their kids so they didn't have to miss out at the last minute like within an hour left to go. That's the kind of the variety of besides ReZoomion in which I know we'll get your online viewing experience that's been kind of the variety of things that we have offered in our mission center. We also have a that's that's for senior high. We also have sent started online junior high youth group once a month that meets on a Saturday night as well. And so that's also happening. So yeah, there's just a variety of different things of writing different entry points, ways to stay connected. Continue to think of other things that we can do that might be fun or different and not the not the norm basic to gather online.

Brittany Mangelson 28:12

Wow. Sounds like you've been busy.

Sean Langdon 28:16

Just a little.

Brittany Mangelson 28:18

So when I asked you to do this, I knew that you had done a variety of things. I particularly remember the Spirit Week and the crazy hair day that stands out. In, in my Facebook scrolling, I definitely remember seeing people that I know and love dearly and thinking, what are they doing? And then realizing, oh, this is part of something bigger than themselves. They're not just wearing like paper plates on their head or just for the heck of it.

Sean Langdon 28:46

I was going through, I have somebody giving a testimony in the worship this Sunday and when they have a testimony and or speaker I always put their picture on the advertising testament that I do for our services online. As I was going her Facebook page, look at her pictures and like, where did this picture like, Oh my gosh, why would you have this picture here? And then I realized, Oh, it's been spirit week and some crazy hair day.

Brittany Mangelson 29:10

I love that it was Spirit Week that made her.

Sean Langdon 29:12

Yeah, um, she can rest assured that I did not choose that photo, though.

Brittany Mangelson 29:17

Oh, that's hilarious. And I love that they're, you know, unless the person deletes them, they're up there forever.

Sean Langdon 29:22

Yes, yes. Even then they're still around somewhere forever.



Brittany Mangelson 29:25

They're still there. Oh, my goodness. So I just have to say kudos to you all, because like I was saying, I knew that you had done a variety of things, but I did not realize how much you had done. And I love like you said a variety of entry points. So you have casual hangouts that have no agenda that have no structure that have no point other than just fellowship and connecting with another human being. You have educational pieces where you're taking classes and doing deep dives into racial justice and really important timely topics, and then worship services. And I love that you pointed out that you've been able to connect with other mission centers and other congregations and get other church leadership and church leadership at different levels to join your worship services because that's one thing that you know my congregation has started doing is pulling in other people because when you think about it, guest ministry can be expensive to fly somebody out. I mean to fly Ryan Pitt out to the west coast. I mean, that costs a lot of money, but to pipe him in through zoom, it's a really, really great way to, like you said, broaden your understanding of the church and get a different perspective. Because we know that in Community of Christ, we vary depending on where we're at. And so I really appreciate knowing that you all are taking advantage of this. And like I said, that's something that my congregation is just starting to do. We've had several guest ministers lately. It's been just good to get out of our own little bubble and to recognize that this church is bigger than ourselves. So yeah, but I'm, again, just really impressed at all of the different ways that you have found to connect. And honestly going from only having like a small amount of experience before COVID and then diving in and doing all of that. And like you said, we haven't even touched on reunion yet, I'm just impressed. And yeah, I don't even know what else to say about it. I'm just super impressed. Um, I do have a couple questions. So I am wondering if you have seen any sort of like zoom fatigue or have your numbers been consistent, or have you been able to, you know, maybe reach out to people that have been disengaged in congregational life and then they come back or what what it's like the actual dynamic numbers and stuff. What what's that been like?

Sean Langdon 32:01

So, um, so the first Sunday that we had online worship in March, our zoom account can handle up to 100 devices. And I didn't know I had no like, understanding that that would even be, I thought we would get like, you know, 75 devices or whatever, right? We had so many people log on that we hit 100, early on, before the worship started, and I had to kept like texting the participants in the worship saying, Get on now or you're not going to be able to get on. Our speaker got kicked off at one point before he was able to speak and there was a moment of panic. But, um, so the next week, we made sure that we expanded our accounts and we had over 200 devices by the next week. We typically, you know, our average of beginning was about 250 devices or so 225-250 which, you know, that's devices so that represents several hundred people, when you factor in couples and families and whatnot that are joining in front of their screens. We know that the most that we had participating was the Sunday the first Sunday in June when Steve Veazey did preach the community price president, when he preached for our mission centers, online worship, we had over 400 devices that week with a capacity of 500. So we didn't meet it there, but that was the most we had had. And we had another week where we had a high really like around 300 as well, but we've noticed that of course, like in

congregational life, when summer hits, numbers go down. So right now we're averaging probably about 175 to 200. Every Sunday devices, which I think is still great, and numbers wise, but you know, people are out doing a lot of outdoor stuff this summer, because they can't do much, you know else when it comes to safe activities to do during covid. Usually, you know, it can't be in other stuff. hygiene is the status one of the better options to get outdoors and stuff. So we've noticed that I noticed that our numbers have done some because of that. And fatigue is definitely always an issue, right? Because all of us outside of the church ministries, you know, we have worked on zoom, we have school on zoom, we have, you know, I've had some times where I've just some friends and I have met online on zoom or on the house party app, and for Jen game nights, just as friends because we couldn't meet in person. So um, I would say that, you know, zoom for tea definitely plays into I think people are starting to find their rhythm more and realize that they get to choose what they participate in and what they don't and are becoming better at managing their schedules in terms of their time on their screens and devices. And so, I'm not that it's great, especially for those of us that, you know, for those of us that are working for the church, a lot of ministry is already done online. And a lot of it's already the emails and everything. And but that was just magnified even more because of it. And so I know that a lot of people in their employment and like I said students and whatnot are having to deal with that. So that's why we just stressed that, you know, you don't need attend everything and attend what speaks to you attend, but you know, invites to be engaged in. And but it may be that, you know, again, not everything does and that's fine, don't try to do it. And do it helps you take care of yourself, you know, spiritually relationally, but also personally, as well. And so I think that that is, is key to, especially when before because I think the reality is, is that we're going to be doing this for quite a while longer before we have opportunities to really gather. I know that in my mission center, we're really being kind of careful about the process to reopen and we currently have two congregations that are meeting outside. That's it out of all of our groups. So and part of that is because a lot of them don't qualify yet because of the numbers, but it's also the numbers here in Washington, Oregon are a lot different than they are in a lot of other areas, too. We're not Washington isn't a hotspot anymore, and Oregon never was. So, um, and Alaska, you know, compared to other areas never was, as well. So, it's been a little different that regard but yeah, I would say that in terms of tensile fatigue, you know, people are just starting to find their rhythm. And I think they found that during the summertime because the nicer weather, we've had a very sunny and hot summer here in the northwest and have to stay compared to normal, but that's also become the new norm as well. That's a different than when I was a kid. So I yeah, I think that that's the key to it and that people are finding, you know what they need to do.

Brittany Mangelson 37:00

Yeah, and I think that that's why it's important that you all have provided such a variety of things. Because if something doesn't speak to you, then there might be something else that will speak to you. And my kids just slammed the door.

Sean Langdon 37:16

This side moment brought to you by the Mangelson kids!

Brittany Mangelson 37:19

Seriously! Oh my goodness. Um, but yeah, I think that that is true from what I've seen, too, you know, at the beginning of pandemic and I was one of those, like, hopping on every worship service. And it was mostly partially because I wanted to support friends that were preaching or whatever and like, now I can, because it's all on zoom. And then also just to kind of give a flavor of what other congregations were doing and everything but that kind of hit a point where I was like, I don't have to do this. There's no reason that I have to try to be at everything at all times. So I know that, you know, I'm still consistent with The ones that I am consistent with, but I'm not trying to overload myself with zoom worship services or anything like that. So always a good thing to keep in mind.

Sean Langdon 38:11

Definitely.

Brittany Mangelson 38:13

Ah, okay, so we've kind of danced around reunion a little bit. So let's dive into it. I know that a lot of other groups, mission centers, we're just doing different things for reunion. I've seen several different ways to go about it. And I am just really intrigued to hear about your experience, because I don't know if well, I shouldn't say this, but I will. I don't know. I don't think anyone else did it. Like you all. I think that there was a lot of mission centers that maybe took elements of reunion. But you all seem to just like, do reunion as you're going to do reunion and just do it on zoom. So tell us about it.

Sean Langdon 38:55

Yeah. So as you were approached In the summertime, and of course, you know, facing the reality that we would have youth camps in Reagan's council we have in our mission center, we have something like eight or nine youth camps and for reunions every summer, in addition to our caravan and spec delegation trips, so we have a lot that normally would happen. And we wanted to provide a place where we can still have a reunion experience together, even if we couldn't be in person. And so we kind of wrestled with, I put together a team and we just kind of wrestled with not wanting to have fatigue during the experience for people, but also recognizing that we want to provide opportunities that would be reunion life. And that might feel like a somewhat normal day of reunion. But also recognizing that we didn't need to be somewhat normal as well, right? Like, we have an opportunity here to do things differently. So that's okay, as well and that's, you know, to be embraced, and, and, you know, when we average is related to this recognition that again, not everybody has to join everything. That we provide during the week. And so we put together a team and we talked about, you know, we had we decided off the bat, you know, we have our online youth group, it was meeting every week now it meets twice a month moving forward. And we just decided, because they already had that experience, we didn't really anticipate seeing many youth necessarily want to get online in the middle of July for, you know, to be on zoom all day. So we decided not to have a senior high youth class and decided not to have a middle school class because we weren't sure that middle school kids would want to get online either. For that kind of experience. Again, they were also meeting once a month. But we didn't want to provide something for the young kids,

because that's not something we're really focused on. Yes. So we did have you know, we said we wanted to have classes for younger aged youth, children and elementary children. And we also we didn't go the route of having online youth camps like submission centers did as well. We decided against doing that. Because we just knew that, again, we hadn't settled, you know, several people that because we are in the northwest, and it wasn't hitting so hard that would be out and about that would be out, you know, spending time in the outdoors. And again, it proved to be true life. Over this summer, I've seen where many of our youth have been spending their summer days at lakes and rivers and hiking and, and whatnot. So I think it would have been hard to get them together. And so then we came time to have our experience as we lead up to it, we decided to have by all of our guests ministers that we would have had this summer at our reunions to participate in it worked. We traveled to book them all during the online experience. So the basic schedule was, it was Tuesday to Sunday morning. And the flow was Tuesday through Friday, we would have in the morning time we would have breakfast club for a half hours you could join, begin your day just by gathering together online and shared and formally, that was actually that part was Tuesday to Saturday. And also Tuesday to Saturday, we had an online kind of parent testimony service, which would be one of the first things you would do in the morning that most of our reunions. And that went well, we actually, you know, breakout rooms a lot on zoom for that. And we just had some really good sharing and again, sharing with people that you wouldn't otherwise normally get to share with because we have, again, we have three campgrounds, so in for reunions at those three campgrounds, plus we have Alaska, which sometimes they have members that might fly down for something, but they also have their own retreat that replace their reunion experience. So you know, now we're doing small group prayer testimony, you know, sharing with people from, you know, Seattle, Washington and Medford, Oregon and Fairbanks, Alaska, right. And it's just a beautiful thing. Also, also, we had somebody who started joining us from Kenya, and so it was somebody that he was looking into community Christ and one of our members was in contact with them and invite them to start joining our workshops and then invite them to resume in. So they participated in a lot of the resume in events, and shared and whatnot. And now because of that their mission center president is joining our worships almost every Sunday, as well, because he's made the connection with this person locally. And in the afternoons, one day we had community lunch, and it was very, very popular. And so we ended up having another day as well added an autism special day and it was just go make your lunch after classes over go make your lunch, come back and eat together and visit and share just like Breakfast Club but a bunch of time. I skipped coffee. Last time we had an Africa and testimony service. We made sure there was breaks in between so that people could get up and stretch and go to the bathroom, go spin eat whatever we had Team. I'm a subcommittee team on my planning team that focused on children's classes and several volunteers that helps put that on where they did join activities together. But they also kind of split up elementary aged kids into two groups, older and younger and had separate events for them on zoom as well. And so that was I know that those that participated in that really enjoyed that experience. We had our kind of, we didn't call it an adult class, that's what it normally would have been. But we kind of you know, we called it an intergenerational classes wanted all to realize that they could join in with Larry McGuire, one of our presidents of 70 and Community of Christ and he led us in four days of classes that were really helped people, I think, think, help people think more outside the box when it comes to

church and what churches to be about and we're maybe being invited to go which was really helpful for the body as well. And the afternoons on three of the days during the week we had a chat session. So again, two o'clock people get online and one day was just leadership and it was just kind of their time to ask us questions about what was going on the mission center, we kind of shared what was going on from our jobs and what we're doing. We had one day with an acquire that people could get on and ask him questions, and he could share about the work that he does. And people could ask questions about that work or real church or if you know, more questions to go deeper about what happened in class. And then there's also currently a climate justice team that our mission center sponsors. There was supposed to be climate justice colloquia, Spanish Island campground in northwest Washington state this fall that has been postponed, but they're starting to do because of that they're doing online sessions right now. Free of charge for people and they kick that off in July. So we had a chat session that was with this climate justice team have that it's up church members in the US and Canada that are leading that and so that was a good experience as well then we would take a break um you know, we would just go get your canteen now or you know, just get back from nap you know, before that chats or whatever. But we've been together again till the evening. And the evening time we we gathered for worship Tuesday through Friday night. And you know, one night we had the first night was actually I think the coolest thing that we did as part of the Week One of the coolest things is that we recognize that one, there was going to be a loss because of people not being able to gather at campgrounds though these sacred spaces for reunion and youth camps this summer. And, you know, our campgrounds, of course, are also receiving financial loss but not having all these camper days, those bookings. So, we wanted to start off as kind of a unity events recognizing that hey, we do come from different areas, but we are one so let's Kick off by that's how good a celebration of our three campgrounds the first night. And so we had Barbara Walden, who is the Executive Director for the community of price historic sites Foundation, who we sponsor to sponsor this event with them. And she joined us and she shared the history of camp of reunions in Community of Christ. And then we had videos of on shot, you know, on site, I mean location videos of what the cameras look like. For every campground we had the origin story shared about how we got the campground or and that was shared by a representative from that area. We had two testimonies of people that attend camps at that campground and what it means to them and it was just, it was an awesome night of just feel that we sing some songs shared just of learning more and celebrating six sacred spaces that we all love. Then we had a generosity moments as a fundraiser and invited people to send money into one or more campgrounds in the mission center that they are connected to. We had of course pictures of all you know, campgrounds, events that happened there years past and current which was, which was a lot of fun to relive those memories as well. Oh, the second night we had apostle mareeba from French Polynesia and her husband joining us for ministry and so we actually got to have a choir video of a choir singing from there as part of our worship and then they shared and there was a little nervous at first because they were having outages and internet on the on the islands at that time and we weren't sure well, how it was all end up happening but their internet works just as like the worship started and we had no issues the rest of the worship it was it was amazing. And they did a great job of course and it was great to expose our our people to international leadership. Community of Christ. On the next night, Thursday night, Shandra Newcomb, who's the mission center president for this Sierra

Pacific mission center in Northern California. It was going to be a guest minister at one of our readings shared and, again, another just great worship experience to help bring us together. Friday night, Larry McGuire, as kind of our reading guest minister shared the sermon with us and we always enjoy an opportunity to listen to him preach and our mission center. We also gifted him that night as a reinvests ministry. He was our guest minister, also for our conference last year. And he talks he jokingly talked about yoga during some of his remarks about new expressions because of this church that does yoga in their sanctuary. So we decided then that he was supposed to be at two of our rooms to center that we were going to get him a yoga mat for his gift as guest ministry so that that we also presented him with his personalized Larry McGuire yoga mat and that he says that sent me a video of him receiving it and showing us how he was going to use it that we posted on our Facebook page, which is a lot of fun. So that was kind of me a campfire after that our evening services. So that was kind of an online campfire. And then we just let people stay on and visit. So we had visited, it was going to like 10 o'clock at night just, you know, normally normally would happen in the dining hall at a campground usually. And this time, it just happened on zoom. And so that was kind of the Tuesday to Friday experience again, Saturday already started with parent testimony, but then we kicked off all day long scavenger hunt, where we actually had a price that was you know, you had a we had a winner that was going to be announced and they could submit stuff. And now that I share this, I realized that I never set the price to the winner. So I have to be sure I get on that with the steelbook cuz I'm sure they're wondering whether a gift card is, um, and then that night we had our second talent show for the mission Center, which is something we'll do probably, you know, again here sometime in the fall as well. But this Sunday morning, we had our wrap up of just having a kind of a mission Saturday mission center unity workshop, where our mission center president reached I presided, and we just kind of focused on, you know, where do we go from here? to kind of wrap up the experience. But yeah, for us, it was definitely a balance of what can we provide that people would want to have that reunion as well as Is it too much but also saying, choose what you want to participate and don't feel like you have to do everything, just pick and choose what sounds good to you? And, and at the end of the experience, what was so amazing is there were so many comments online. But there were so many comments online, within the days following about how they were feeling. The same kind of exhaustion that they would feel going to an in person reunion but they were also experiencing The same amount of kind of sadness that it was over the neighborhood that they would feel once they leave the campground to go home for a year. And so, you know, to me that was a powerful statement. So what online ministry can be, because we had people participate in what we called resuming for our online reunion, we had people participate that normally wouldn't go to reunion, you know, going camping for a week doesn't speak to them or, you know, whatever reason, or they can't get away just because of work or because of it being online. They could still do any services or whatever the whatever the reason is, we had people that participated. Because of that, our our classes, our generational class was probably like around 40 devices every day in off and on and our prayer testimony services were similar 35 to 40. And it'll fluctuate as the week went on, but eating services were around 100 devices and yeah, definitely was a recognition and a nod toward The Holy Spirit moves even online because it was able to have a camp experience online and people still felt not that they weren't missing, we all are missing, not being in person and not being able to share in the experiences of you know, the campground with each other. And

those are those afternoon conversations or evening conversations or before breakfast conversations that are just not natural and organic and just happen to invest in each other's lives, but at the same time it's not a total loss. Also, there's other ways that we are connected

Brittany Mangelson 53:31

It sounds like the numbers that you just shared. It sounds like that wasn't success, right? Like, people showed up, wanted that. And if people were expressing that they had the same, you know, sense of loss at the end of the reunion online as they would leaving reading in the same sense of like, oh, we're gonna miss this. I mean, that's massively successful. And I know that that took a lot of courage and innovation and creativity because it was difficult. I mean, I think I can speak for everybody, every minister who has tried to do online ministries, it's not easy to know what it's going to look like, or it's going to show up. I mean, you could plant a ton of stuff and then have like, two people come. But you didn't have two people come. I mean, it sounds like it was a really, really successful time, which I just, I really think that like you said, it speaks to just the fact that God can work wherever we are, we can meet on zoom, we can meet God there. The Spirit can work with us even on zoom. So I'm just really impressed. And I know that, you know, there was a lot of ministers who rightfully so weren't really sure where to go with reunion and didn't know if it was worth the effort or people would jump over it or anything. But I really am so impressed. Rest that you guys just tried and it was so successful

Sean Langdon 55:04

I will admit that leading up to it for quite a long time and I don't know if it was just because I was experiencing loss and grief over not being the quote unquote normal summer but I I was not looking forward to it like it was like okay i'm planning this but I'm I really invested in it and it wasn't until a few weeks before it was like wow, this is really coming together and people are getting excited for like I I'm excited to see what happens. Um, and you know, we had we had people in our mission center participate but we had people that used to live here that now live in the East Coast and like the Washington DC and Virginia area that participated off and on and we had a church number that comes from the northwest in Europe that participated off and on you know, like I said, the one from Kenya so there's, it was just awesome to see how it united even beyond in terms of numbers, were I also then, you know, came to experience I've learned wretched many camps and I co directed a reunion or two as well. And I've been on the team though for planning reunions for off and on for years since I was like 15 years old, and are 18 years old, in high school. So I, I have been a part of that for a long time and seeing that side of things. It's funny how directing an online reunion leaves you just as exhausted as the director, as it does in person. I mean, it's just a different, it's different things that are causing that. So there will be mornings during zoom in where I would, you know, text the person who was doing prayer testimony services to Hey, just to let you know, I will not be on this morning. That you know, I also pick and choose when I participated so that I wouldn't get exhausted because I was up half the night. You know, we record all our services and so we then put clips up then email out the services to our membership that requests a link to it. But we also then, post highlights on our YouTube channel. So I was working on editing videos after services and I was all afternoon I was making more videos for services that night because everything you know, you're now making all these hymn videos or your you know, these other videos that need to go

need to happen in graphics and whatnot and get everything in place. So it's just a different focus as a director that I had to put my energy in, you know, towards, but it's amazing how much exhausting it still was compared to. It wasn't like, Oh, this is easy. I'm at home. I don't have to, I don't have to do a work skip, you know, work schedule. I don't have to find, you know, all these different volunteers. But nope, it's just a different kind of different different activities that lead to exhaustion, different roles.

Brittany Mangelson 57:34

Yeah, for sure. And it's just so much to juggle even, I mean, like, if you're involved with the back end on the tech side, like during the actual event, or trying to help people understand how to use Zoom, or there's just, there's so many different components to it. So I can only imagine what it would be like to do an entire weekend online. Yeah that's a lot of work.

Sean Langdon 57:55

I also wanted to mention that we did you know, in a addition to not having to keep having people participate that would not normally go to reunion. We had people that participated that also maybe haven't been engaged in Community of Christ for a while, which is we've just seen that through all of our online ministries, you know, people that have kind of stopped coming, you know, for one reason or another might be there in disagreement with somebody in their home congregation or, or the traditional church model just wasn't working for them. So going to church, you know, we have people that are participating that congregational life building worship wasn't their thing. But they really like the online worship. And so that's the same for ReZoomion and we had people participate. And, you know, we have some somebody who participated, who's you know, now, we kind of had stopped coming to, you know, the Christ congregation went to a different church, but is coming to, you know, came to resume and started to come to our workshops and is now you know, he's exploring where Community of Christ is right now and being open to conversations about and I just found it to be a beautiful journey. That, I don't know if it would have happened if it wasn't for online things like worship and resume and and stuff like that. So those, those stories that you hear those testimonies that you hear through people's journeys are happening still in different ways, you know now as well, which is awesome. We've had people that, you know, are being introduced to the Community of Christ because of zoomy and, and workshops and stuff like that, which is awesome. So the audience definitely for the week, is that out of the two minutes that we have at reunion, and we have people that are diehard reading people that didn't participate? It wasn't there. It wasn't a thing. We asked the directors. Do you want to help? And you know, most of them said that I don't think that that's going to be my thing, and which was fine, totally fine. Totally. You know, they're two different experiences. Some of them did help those well served on the team, but yeah, blessings abound, still.

Brittany Mangelson 59:57

Yeah. And again, just being creative and providing a lot of different varieties of opportunities, I think is the key. And that's why I just, I feel like I've said the word impressed. I don't know, 800 times, and I'm not meaning to like, make you all feel weird, but I really am impressed and which is exactly why I wanted to talk about this, and specifically the ministries that you all have been



doing because you just have reached a huge amount of people in such a short amount of time when you're basically making it up as you go. Because that's what we're all doing during Covid. Like we're all figuring out how to do our job in an in a very different way and how to worship and how to just yeah, stay connected with people, so.

Sean Langdon 1:00:40

I've learned a lot more about zoom since March, much more about zoom, and how to do music on zoom and the struggles with that and the horrifying active trying to sing on zoom, which is not something that anybody should do without their mics unmuted. Congregation can still sing and y'all sound beautiful, but stay muted when you sing as a congregation on Zoom.

Brittany Mangelson 1:01:08

I have had one experience where we did kind of like a call and response song and like, this is a repeat after me song. We concluded like it was hilarious and it kind of worked. Like maybe 60% of it worked. But we really think that the actions were what carried it through. And we were all just so focused on watching what was happening with the actions that we probably didn't realize how terrible it was because we were like, Man, that actually worked. We figured out a way to sing on zoom and then we're like, but did we? We were probably terrible actually,

Sean Langdon 1:01:40

I keep having people push back even now well, can we just try to sing this? Like No, we really can't like it's not gonna work. So then there'll be something like after a worship on Sunday, somebody would be have a birthday so they want us all to sing happy birthday to the person. And then after so they do unmuted and I say that I'd say and that's why we don't sing on Zoom during worship.

Brittany Mangelson 1:02:05

Oh, that's hilarious. That's like one of my favorite parts just reminded me of one of my favorite parts of these services and I, you know, have attended some of your guys's services and then just our own is when everybody unmutes and at once people are like Hi, Sally. Hi, Bob. Hi, Susie. Oh, hello, how's Ryan? Oh, how

Sean Langdon 1:02:23

We're going for that in our mission center to it's, what I love is that we had a different mission center join us for worship in June, because they weren't doing their own their own worship that Sunday and because our people didn't know how to handle it at first because they were quiet because the other mission center came on. They just talk like normal like they would on their own zoom account. You know, worship. It was great. Awesome.

Brittany Mangelson 1:02:48

Oh, gosh. It's like being socially awkward on zoom. It's just it's a whole new level of just hilarious. Yeah. Yeah. So Shawn, we've talked a lot about online ministries obviously, and I'm just wondering if you could share just some of your biggest learning takeaways that you have come to understand over the last couple of months, if people if ministers of congregations of

mission centers are wanting to start maybe expanding what they're already doing, I don't want to start because I think we're all under the understanding that people are doing this. But if they want to start something that they haven't done before, just what are your biggest takeaways? What would your advice be?

Sean Langdon 1:03:30

Yeah. First of all, I think find out you know, like, it's find out what the people are needing, and not necessarily assuming that which is the case for any missional opportunity. But, you know, that's why when we started a breakfast club, it was because there was a need for that kind of informal relational sharing, that was expressed, and so we responded to that need by having it and so I think, you know, trying to figure out responsiveness, because what we don't want to do is put a lot of effort into something that doesn't meet people's needs, and so therefore, they don't come. So I think that that's really important, it's really important to then understand the technology that you're using, as well. And I will say that one of my personal reflections that I, that I would like to be better about is that I'm currently, I have been the only one doing the host for everything, pretty much. I have a member of a colleague of mine who does the faith formation, and she does all of that. So I don't do any of that. And she does all the temple school classes. But for most Sunday events, and some of the other talent show, I've done most of the hosts and hosting responsibilities, and so you also put together a pool of people that you can help train to do that so that you're not doing it all yourself. And that's which is what I'm now going towards. I think if I had done that earlier on, I would have been able to engage in different ways myself, you know, as well which is important. And also the mission center gets a lot of Sean right now that we don't get too much the same person. A is also probably better for the mission center, or the congregation or whoever that you're working, that you're bringing ministry to, you know, making sure that people have proper cues and instructions for stuff because this is going to be new for everybody. But recognizing also that don't get stuck in the trap of saying, well, this person can only join by phone, so therefore, it's not really meaningful for them. I have several examples of people joining by phone where it was, you know, they were in tears because they were finally able to engage in ministry again after being isolated, or whatever it might be. So I just, you know, be careful not to you know, I see that's minimize the impact that's gonna have on all generations is what that kind of goes towards as well. I had the only pieces the only like, thank you cards that I've gone about this has all been from people that are like above like 70 years old, right? You never thought that this is going to be something that they would be able to receive ministry from, you know, when we talked about new expressions of community last year, they would have never thought that they would have. A lot of them are now being forced to realize that oh my gosh, this is all ages. I used to think that congregational ministry was the only way that I was going to be participating church life, that was my thing. So when he talks about new expressions of community, I was like, well, this is not really for me, it's for other people. And then they were being forced themselves to actually engage in it, and being ministry, you know, being minister to it. So there, you know, I have had messages from people who are homebound who are saying, Wow, I get to engage with Community of Christ again. So don't you know, be very careful not to minimize also the impact that it can have on all generations, including our senior members and friends. It's those have been some of the most

powerful encounters that I've had online with this ministry is knowing how it has reached people. Never thought that technology would reach them in this way.

Brittany Mangelson 1:07:06

I think that is so important because I know that I have been guilty of that is just assuming like, Oh, well, they don't have the internet. So they're not even going to be interested or, you know, we they won't be able to watch the thing or see my screen or whatever. And so we just kind of assume that they then shouldn't be included. Like, that's terrible, right? That's, that's absolutely terrible. But it's really easy to fall in that rut. But yeah, it's a really good reminder to, to not let our own preconceived ideas of the limitations limit us, right, like we shouldn't, we shouldn't just assume that something can't be done or that something won't be meaningful, just because of, you know, some perceived limitation. So thank you for that. That's a really, really good reminder. So I know that you mentioned earlier I am in full agreement with you that we're going to be doing this online ministry thing for a while, like we're kind of in it for the long haul, as far as COVID worship styles go, but I am curious to know if you have any thoughts on what online ministry could or should look like, post pandemic. So, obviously, the goal is to be at a campground together again, obviously, doing caravan again, being face to face in a Pew build, that's what everybody wants. But do you see a future for online ministries with the church? And what do you think that could look like?

Sean Langdon 1:08:40

Right. So I think that you know, it has been a beautiful thing to see how Community of Christ has embraced online ministries, not only before this, but especially during this I have been so impressed to use that word on what other mission centers are doing or what our seminary has done to provide online conversations and learning and our guests Science Foundation has done stuff online. And there's just been a lot that's going on. And I think that we're realizing that that needs to continue. And that, you know, post pandemic mission center will still be having online worships on Sundays. It'll make it look, you know, might be able to evolve into looking a little bit different for how warships are done. But and then they'll go, it's probably the Sunday evenings instead of Sunday morning, so we don't compete, but at the same but and so people can do both if they want to. Because as we have learned throughout the pandemic, people like go to church apparently worships several times a day on Sunday. Um, but I, you know, what this has opened their eyes to is that not we don't, we're not just creating space for people who would normally go to worship on Sunday or other ministries in the church camps or whatever. We are now operating ministry and space for people who are in remote locations where they're not by Community of Christ congregation. We are now providing ministry to people who are homebound and can't get to a congregation for worship and you're able to feel like I am actively participating in Community of Christ again. So not continuing these ministries forward even post pandemic actually becomes a justice conversation for us. When there are people who are you know homebound because of physical or health or whatever it might be people who are have to work on the weekends who are now able to find ways because even if they can't participate on Sunday morning, they can watch the video that later and feel a part of the group or you know, whatever it might be or other things during the week. So my hope is, you know, for Community of Christ that we continue to realize that this is another tool that we have

to bring ministry to people, and it is just as valid and as important as it is to meet on Sunday mornings or any day of the week in a congregational building, trust me. I am an extreme extrovert. I love being around people I work from home. And so I work really from Starbucks. Starbucks is my office. And so I have been missing my office the last several months, because I just like being around people when I work, and I feed off of that energy, but I, so we can't, you know, this has just as much validity in the life of the church or ministry as anything else does. And we're seeing people engage in ways that they haven't, and we're seeing relationships formed that would not have been formed. And so yeah, I think the first the future of the church is going to continue to embrace different ways of gathering. And we're already seeing that they already was right, like we were prepared because of the communion and go into offering online communion. So there already was a journey already continue, I'd already started I mean, and so that journey is just gonna continue moving forward and things are gonna we're gonna you know, we just have to be open to where the spirit leaves us and the opportunities that it leaves us to provide ministry in this way. I also look at you know, people who are searching and I you know, being in the northwest We are an area that is Northwest USA, that has a very high percentage of people that are the spiritual but not religious crowd or people who stopped engaging in church and religion, but not necessarily in their relationship with God or divine or something, whatever they however they define it. And so online worships or otherwise it actually, I think, become a safe space to engage, possibly because, um, whereas when you go to a congregational building, you're on, you know, people, everybody knows that you're not only there and so you can become a focus. There's kind of now a safe space with online ministries for people to start to engage in ministry and receiving ministry that is maybe safer for them. And then maybe that's an entry point for them that leads to something more and so I also looked at it that way too. We can't deny that opportunity going forward.

Brittany Mangelson 1:13:03

I love that you framed it as a issue of justice that it's a justice issue and I think too It can be seen as a justice issue with kind of your second point with people who feel done with religion A lot of times people are done with religion because they have been harmed by religion and so, you know, I'll go on obvious record and say that I don't think that Community of Christ sets out to be harmful, right? We we our goal is to be Invitational to be welcoming to be inclusive, to uplift the voices of the people who have traditionally been shut out by religion. And I think that we do a very, we take a very active role in that. And so in some ways, that's an issue of justice as well is you know, you you know, you're LGBTQIA+ ministry, you are giving a platform and an avenue to connect people Who again, have historically been left out of churches and are providing an avenue for them to understand that God's grace includes them and God's love includes them. So, yeah, I think that that that you connecting it to an issue of justice, I think that there's a lot of, gosh, we could like probably do a whole hog. And I have a lot about it as an issue of justice. So yeah, thank you for that. Yeah.

Sean Langdon 1:14:25

I you know, like you mentioned that also because I, I forgot to mention earlier that was our LGBTQIA+ and allies ministry, we were scheduled to have our first retreat like two weeks after everything shut down so that we had to postpone it to the fall. And then obviously, we've now

just postpone that until this is over, and that we haven't rescheduled the date yet for it. I'm just waiting to see how everything unfolds. But we then have had some online ministries for that as well. We've had two worships now. We're going to have a third one in a few weeks in September, and where we've been provided just communion worship for the LGBTQIA plus community and allies in our mission center. And we've had several join from other areas as well. And I know that, you know, our harmony ministry also sponsoring now online gatherings. And so, I think that's also, um, when you talk about justice in that terms, like, the fact that we're creating safe space online in this time of COVID is so important because that's already a community that is already harmed with a lot of relationships. And so they there's a need to I think hunger, as somebody myself, who's in that community, there's a hunger to be able to join with others that know what it's like to be isolated, while also still on your journey of continuing to seek to understand who you are as a, as a human. So, that's also been a blessing.

Brittany Mangelson 1:15:51

And I think too, you know, with ministry specifically for LGBTQIA plus a lot of times, you know, with with COVID, a lot of these kids and young adults are now forced back into homes because they are not, you know, like their their home of origin because they're not able to be in their college dorm or whatever it may be. And that's not always a safe place. So, again, I just want to affirm, you know, the importance of what you're doing and that yeah, online ministries really can be an issue of justice. So yeah,

Sean Langdon 1:16:25

Absolutely.

Brittany Mangelson 1:16:27

So Shawn, we've covered a lot of ground. I've asked you a lot of questions. But is there anything that I didn't ask or, you know, any last thoughts that you have anything that you wanted to talk about that I wasn't that I didn't get to?

Sean Langdon 1:16:45

No. I don't I can't really think of anything that I'm gonna be talking about a lot. And I think, again, just you know, where we're going is to continue to even beyond COVID embrace this new world that we're in I think that is believe that when we're allowed back in our congregations, you know, it may not, it won't feel the same necessarily for a lot of folks, I think but I hope that things don't go back to normal, as in you know, quote unquote normal of what it means to be an ancient Christian community. And I hope that this experience is transformed that but I do believe that, you know, congregations will go back to, to gathering and having ministries because people are still gonna be hungry for it. But I just hope that we are open to the world beyond what it means to gather and congregational community, recognizing that congregational community, well, recognizing that Christian community is not just congregational building community as well, and that there are many opportunities for us outside the walls of our congregational buildings. And this is just the one area of that that's going to be able to continue. And so I hope that we are always open to learning from this experience and recognizing that it's more, it's both. It's both and but it's more than just meeting

in a building. For worship, the same flow of worship that we do every Sunday, and then going home. And if we're open to that, I think there are some amazing things in store for Community of Christ moving forward. And our ability to reach people will be even more so in this spirit as kind of a, you know, starting to have a closing thought in the spirit of your initial question about Taylor Swift and chase. I would like to share this thought. My favorite Taylor Swift album is Reputation, which is not a popular response in the Taylor Swift Fan community. But I love it because it's sassy and I love Yeah, I love that. So I will say this, to those that are listening to those that you know, whenever we're going, I'm sorry that the old Community of Christ cannot come to the phone right now. Why? Oh, cuz we're being transformed. Oh COVID Look what you made us do look what you made us do it what a blessing that is.

Brittany Mangelson 1:19:13

What a way to end the podcast shot also align that my six year old son quotes but the Taylor Swift version of of it.

Sean Langdon 1:19:25

I uh, You Need To Calm Down and that one are the go to Taylor Swift sass songs but uh yeah,

Brittany Mangelson 1:19:33

I love it and definitely a timely message I mean that that's the whole goal of Christian community, right? It's transformation so yeah, I'm really glad that we just came full circle with Taylor Swift.

Sean Langdon 1:19:47

As we're talking about like searching diversity Okay, what there so I want to leave us with cuz I have to do this. I have to like have this moment at the end of the podcast, so I've used that in a sermon before so I used it again.

Brittany Mangelson 1:20:00

I'm so glad you did! Okay, Sean, well, thank you so much. It's it's always great to have you on and like you said, This is not your first time with Project sign. So for the listeners all go ahead and link the other podcasts that Shawn has been on, cuz he definitely most definitely is a 70 because he talks a lot about mission and he's really passionate about it, which I appreciate. So

Sean Langdon 1:20:24

It's good to be back!

Brittany Mangelson 1:20:25

Yeah, thanks, Sean. We'll obviously have you on again.

Josh Mangelson 1:20:39

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