You're listening to an Extra Shot episode on the Project Zion podcast, a shorter episode that lets you get your Project Zion fixed in between our full-length episodes. It might be shorter time wise, but hopefully not in content. So regardless of the temperature at which you prefer your caffeine, sit back and enjoy this extra shot.

Welcome to this edition of Coffee at the Swarm. This is Mike Hoffman, your host, and we're doing this as a part of Project Zion podcast. Today I have with me Andrew Woolsey, who's in his second year or sophomore here at Graceland University. He's majoring in history and minor in political science, religion and philosophy and International Studies. So it's on the Clawson house. So if any of our listeners are went to Graceland, and we're part of a Clawson house, they'll connect with Andrew pretty easily. So Andrew, welcome to our show.

Thank you for having me. Mike.

Is there anything else you'd add about who you are and what's your, what you're interested in?

I found interests this year and really starting last year in areas such as the Community Development Club, I'm now the CO facilitator for that. I'm also a student pastor with Mike and I'm also a peer mentor with Mike, which is pretty cool. Having two jobs working for Mike.

Yeah, well, the peer mentor just to let our listeners know a little bit about that. You were basically assigned to me of course, I think we sort of wanted that alignment to work. But that's because you're a peer mentor for first year students as a part of their first year seminar class. So, so yeah, I really lucked out because Andrew's student pastor, but also, he works with me on this flat. So we've had a pretty good time doing that too.

Definitely.

So tell us, tell me where you're from and maybe what it was like for you growing up in the church or being associated with the church?
Andrew Woolsey 02:33
So I grew up not in Central Mission, or Colorado. I was born in Des Moines, but I was to move out to Colorado. And the church for me was, I feel it was interesting. My parents were divorced. And so Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, I was in my father growing up. So the church days, you know, I'm at my dad's house, so I would go to the Methodist church with him, the Methodist church at night. But when I go into high school, it started to be more, I could just kind of chose which days I want to be at which house. And so I was able to have church days, my mother, but when I was in high school, I found out that my priorities considered sleep to be higher.

Mike Hoffman 03:16
Of course!

Andrew Woolsey 03:17
Right? Yeah, I still struggle with that today. Um, but I didn't really go to the regular church all that often for Community of Christ. But, for me, the church really was in the youth groups that we have.

Mike Hoffman 03:32
Okay.

Andrew Woolsey 03:33
And so in the Rockies, for those of you wouldn't know, we're very spread out through different cities. So like in Boulder, I was the only Rockies kid there.

Mike Hoffman 03:43
Oh, wow.

Andrew Woolsey 03:45
Um, my cousins were in Denver, which was the bigger populated area for Community Christ and then Colorado Springs also. But you know, we also have kids in Wyoming in the Grand Junction area, so we're all spread out.

Mike Hoffman 03:58
So would you talk about the Rockies are you talking about? Like, I recognize that name as a Spec delegation. So are you talking about?

Andrew Woolsey 04:07
The Mission Center.

Mike Hoffman 04:07
Okay, okay. Yeah. And oh, yeah, of course Rockies. Rocky Mountain Mission Center would be the official name, I guess. And so you did camps as well. Did you go to camps?

Andrew Woolsey 04:19
Yeah. camps and all that. And we also have retreats during the year, which I really appreciated.
Mike Hoffman 04:25
Where did you go on retreat? What or did you go to different places?

Andrew Woolsey 04:29
We would do, um, different churches in the Mission Center. Most of the time in Colorado. That's probably the weekend, if it was like a long weekend or something. We will do that.

Mike Hoffman 04:38
That's good. Okay. So the sounds like we're jumping forward. What brought you to Graceland? I mean, was it the connection through Spectacular then? Or was it just, how did you decide?

Andrew Woolsey 04:50
Well, initially, I always knew I was going to Graceland because of my parents and all of that. But when I started getting older, you know, seeing all the Graceland reps come through the church youth program and all that I saw based on as the only option for me actually only applied to Graceland when I was in high school. Hopefully I got in, right?

Mike Hoffman 05:12
Did I hear you correctly? It was the only place you applied?

Andrew Woolsey 05:15
It is yeah, that's pretty cool. Yep. I applied September my senior year, got in the same month.

Mike Hoffman 05:23
Now but do you have other connections with Graceland going back a little bit because your mom was campus minister here at one point. And you mentioned being born in Des Moines was that when you were when will your mom was assigned here at Graceland?

Andrew Woolsey 05:38
Yes.

Mike Hoffman 05:39
Okay.

Andrew Woolsey 05:39
Um, and my dad also taught a class here I believe.

Mike Hoffman 05:43
Okay,

Andrew Woolsey 05:44
yeah.
Mike Hoffman 05:46
So you always knew you wanted to go to Graceland.

Andrew Woolsey 05:50
And luckily, it's the perfect fit. You know, I cannot see me any other school thriving as much as I am here.

Mike Hoffman 05:57
Yeah. Well, we're glad you're here. I mean, that's to me, it's an obvious good fit. So I'm glad you're here. So this may be early in your academic career, but, you know, there's this Graceland experience that people talk about. So how would you describe the Graceland experience or at least your Graceland experience? How's it been for you?

Andrew Woolsey 06:18
I believe the Graceland experience is something you have to buy into. And if coming from backgrounds that aren't Community in Christ or backgrounds that are similar to the environment here, and I feel it's very hard to buy into. Alongside different problems, such as being an athlete, with the coaches, and denying that ability to buy into the environment. For me, I've loved it though. The environment I'm talking about course is just this leadership and community that everyone thrives to together hold each other up and pushes each other into elements. have different aspects of life we didn't know we could go into.

Mike Hoffman 07:04
So you mentioned about the struggle with some student athletes, sort of finding their place in that community as well. I know that that's, that's been a topic of some student government officers in the past and that kind of thing. I think part of it is that so many of the student athletes that come to Graceland are not part of Community of Christ and so they don't, they don't make that connection that that rich history that we have, with a sense of community and that we, many of us would understand the place to do that. So was your reference sort of a first hand experience? Maybe you met some guys on your house but,

Andrew Woolsey 07:43
Yeah, so like, one example would be my last year's roommate who he was a part of Community of Christ. He was football player though.

Mike Hoffman 07:54
Okay.

Andrew Woolsey 07:54
And so because of that, you know, pre COVID they were able to come out early together as a first practice, which meant that they had their own community before the regular students came, and it was harder to initiate those interactions and get past like, this is your house. You know, I know you're on the
sports team and this is the house that you're on. And so we actually had a couple people who were
football players move houses from our house to be with their football friends.

Mike Hoffman 08:22
So I see, so they would go that far. They would move, actually request to switch houses then? Wow.

Andrew Woolsey 08:30
And another problem is just, I understand why the coaches will deny different activities for their
athletes, like say, Choices or something like that, COSA events, because they want their athletes to be
focused on the sport, which understandable, but part of that Graceland experience we're talking about
is housing experiences.

Mike Hoffman 08:51
And Choices, for those of you listening, Choices and COSA are well Choices is an off campus venue
that Graceland owns and operates. It's a late night hang out place and COSA is the campus
organization for social activities. So that would be basically a sort of Student Activities sponsored, or
organization sponsored activities. So yeah, so and I do, I guess I do understand that partially from, you
know, from a purchase standpoint, they're kind of trying to make sure that team stays healthy and well,
and all those kinds of things. But there is a certain aspect, then that means they those players don't
don't have additional experiences that can bring them into community with o
thers.

Andrew Woolsey 09:40
I really think it's important because my roommate, he was never put in to play for Graceland as a
football player that he was going to leave the school. But luckily, when he was dropping out of that, he
found that the house system was able to scoop him up and take him in and that's the reason he's still
here to this day. Wow. That's really quite a statement, that's so the house system is so significant to
them that it, so he is he back on the football team or not? He is not on the football team anymore.

Mike Hoffman 10:10
So, like you said the house system so to speak, I love that term and sort of included him that's, that's
really a good testament about sort of the nature of community and how strong the houses system is
here. I don't know I, I did not go to Graceland as an undergard, but I know it started in the, I think early
to mid 1960s. So it's been around a long time. Well, let's deviate a little bit from what I said, you
mentioned about the COVID. You know, the current pandemic that we're living through right now, I
know, this has been an interesting summer. You know, you and I are talking mid September and, and
it's obviously the COVID pandemic is still going on. I know it's been a challenge and actually a
challenge to our sense of community to some degree. You had one year without Covid here and one
with Covid so far. Do you want to talk about that?

Andrew Woolsey 11:07
The biggest area that I see COVID effect, besides just the academics would be the commons where we
all eat food. You know, you go in and the tables are set up, whereas they're split off and you have two
persons per table. And they're all separated. And that community sense is really gone. I mean, so now
it is the cafeteria workers are more lenient, and a lot of us who go in houses, will pull chairs up to
tables, you know, and pack it up. But, and they don't really care much anymore. But in the beginning, it was just, you go in, you get your food and you leave, you know?

**Mike Hoffman** 11:45
Yeah. Well, part of it is being in any state as opposed to state of Iowa had really strict guidelines about food service when the pandemic started at the end of the previous semester. And, you know, they—you couldn't even serve food in the dining room. So that hasn't changed. Then once when this semester started, it certainly was different. So, but I hadn't really thought about that. I do remember I haven't eaten in the Commons yet this year. Just that I know the seating for students is different. I thought, well students really need to have a priority about, you know, what seating there's going to be. I hadn't thought about that. Because I remember, you know, in previous years, I'd see all the guys from Clossan all sitting together, you know, for meals. That would be a big change. You also mentioned change in academics, are you? How are your classes? Do you have some classes that are only on Zoom or partially on Zoom?

**Andrew Woolsey** 12:39
I had one class that was only going to be on Zoom, I actually dropped that class. And we won't to say that it was the Community of Christ Theology class.

**Mike Hoffman** 12:49
It was wasn't it? That was only going to be on Zoom.

**Andrew Woolsey** 12:54
It was. But like when you go into a classroom, you have to wipe down the chairs and the desk, you know, and when you leave you do the same. Yeah. And sitting far apart. I know we have small classes here at Graceland, but you really feel that now just spread out as far as we can be. And it's just it's a weird environment, wearing masks in the classroom.

**Mike Hoffman** 13:15
I know you're involved with Inspire the ministry practicum that we're both involved with here, and I know it's like we meet in Cheville chapel, but it feels very different for everybody to be six feet apart, and to try them to have it like a spiritual practice or missional practice. And so while you typically would share the response, you're sort of yelling at it through your mask across, across the way so I know that that part of it's been a challenge. So you mentioned that you've been a student pastor, and certainly I know about our relationship in terms of what church experience advice is like, do you have any thoughts about like, what you what you've experienced so far with the campus ministries program or Sunday morning worship Afterglow or, you know, sort of your church experience while at Graceland, is there any hope for where it might go?

**Andrew Woolsey** 14:12
I really liked it, you know, coming-- one of the reasons I didn't go to church services usually growing up, besides being so early is just sitting there listening to a service, you know, isn't my cup of tea. And here, it's different one. It you know, it's my friends, I'm sure I'm sure it's the same way for the older people at church is their friends speaking so they can worry about that, but they're not my friends. So I
don't really have the same investment that they have, like, you know, these are my friend speaking. So I get to go watch that and support them. And usually pretty cool ideas that I don't really only think about. And then afterglow, the service held at night is primarily, you know, it's a band that plays live music with the speaker, which is, I think, really cool and the different aspects that we have like Last year, we had Bible study, Book of Mormon study. This year, we had Coffee and Tea Talks. And it's different avenues of just worship, I guess. It's really cool.

Mike Hoffman  15:09
Yeah. You mentioned scripture study. We haven't really started it yet. It's like, probably something that we'll get started with before long. I know that it while it was popular, but it was a few students were involved. But it was a very loyal group. I mean, you know, we, we continue to meet, even though you know, the semester basically, students left, but we kept that class going, you know, well into after school would have been out, I guess you can say because, you know, that you just wanted to continue to meet. I think that happened to Coffee and Tea Talks too, that meeting, as part of the summer just, I think looking for that sense of community that some of us lost when over Yeah. So, you've mentioned, we mentioned at the beginning, you know, your majors and minors that you're interested in. Do you have you have a plan or is there something you want to do after you graduate?

Andrew Woolsey  16:12
Um, yeah, there's a lot I want to do. Is there like you talking about a certain timeframe or just like overall or?

Mike Hoffman  16:18
I don't know. Yeah, I, I don't know. What's your interest in history? Where do you go with that?

Andrew Woolsey  16:27
Um, so I like to consider myself a truth seeker. Someone who wants to understand why we are here today. I believe the past is the key to the future. And so that's why I'm a history major. I, you know, I understand it's not really going to come directly into play with what I want to do in my life. But I see it as a greater investment, knowing all that information and being able to think two ways for anything. So political science and religion philosophy are more of my--the ways that are going to really impact my job, my career.

Mike Hoffman  17:02
How so? What are you thinking about?

Andrew Woolsey  17:06
Also, like, there's different aspects that I want to go to in the world in different outlets that I could express, I want to be a pastor when I'm older. In different ways I can express that, I talked to some people around the Mission Center, like one being Daniel Harmon. And together, we were coming up with ideas of like new expressions that I could try to do. My idea would be like in the Rocky Mountain Mission Center, they really care about making sure they are growing and thriving. But other areas that I've really come to terms with are going out into different areas, not just the US but like, say, maybe I go
into the Ukraine because like right now, you know, Ukraine is being invaded by Russia, and being a pastor in that area, and seeing what that's like and how I can learn and try to help out where I can.

Mike Hoffman 17:58
Pretty cool. So you're religion and philosophy and even International Studies could play into that sort of hope to go somewhere like that and make an impact. And at the same time learn to appreciate your sort of angle toward lifelong learning. And that's part of what the Inspire practicum is sort of goes on. So, yeah, you want to be a pastor. That's incredible. That's really good. I really appreciate that. Like, you know, it's not everyone's desire to do that, but I appreciate your interest in that because it, it gives, I don't know about other listeners but it gives me great hope about the future of the church. There are young adults who are really interested in that. And, you know, I don't know what you said something that caught my attention, but you and Daniel Harmon, you know, sort of planning new expressions. Have you come up with any ideas, particularly about the expression or, um,

Andrew Woolsey 18:59
Yeah, we were talking about some ideas and one of them being it, like I say, going out into a Boulder, Colorado or something like that, like a city, it's not really attached to the Mission Center, and creating a program of just maybe volunteer opportunities, and not having it directly tied to a Community of Christ. But being like, Oh, this event is sponsored by Community of Christ, we're doing this activity. And then if that happens to draw people to Community of Christ, that's great. That's not the idea behind it. The idea behind it is to fit real world needs, you know, trying to push past talks and charity and what we want to help seeing what actually needs to be helped in that area.

Mike Hoffman 19:40
Absolutely. I think you can shape inspire with that too, because that's sort of what we try to do on campus. It's like, you know, it's coming out of your giftedness and trying to figure out what you're, what you're involved with. So, overall, what would be your like, if you could sort of look at the entire Community of Christ I'm not thinking just like a local congregation here. What are your hopes for Community of Christ in the future when you can share something with the leadership of the church? Is there something some hope you have in something you'd sort of? Sort of wish that would happen?

Andrew Woolsey 20:17
Yeah, I think I would ask a question to leadership. And the question is, you know, what kind of church are we? Are we one that's trying to comfort the dying cause? And make it just as pleasant pleasant for everybody who's involved, but eventually we're gonna die out or are we a church that's gonna make dramatic trend change, and really not just like in our own church, but actually changing the world. And hopefully, if that does happen, that relates to our missions and principles that we hold dear to us. And, you know, looking through history, you can't just go in 80% into this change and say, Oh, we have some people doing this change. But over here we're going to be doing resting and in the church services doing our normal thing. I look at it. And to me, it makes complete sense that it has to be 100%. All in. Everyone wants to do this change. My question would be, what kind of church are we focused on the aspect I was talking about before? Are we going to be going into the future?
Mike Hoffman 21:23
And, you know, our conversation today is sort of like a time period, at least in US history, or the timeframe where the issues of social justice and racial justice weaknesses is really becoming very much sort of front and center in conversations on the news and even even within student groups.
We've talked about that my class, our class that we worked on together, the first year seminar, and you know, I don't know if you can see that but the cover the latest peril for September, one Hover is all about systemic racism. So I don't know if that's where you're going. But, you know, it's like when you talk about wanting to change, what are your thoughts about all what's going on in the world? And

Andrew Woolsey 22:13
You're asking me what my thoughts are on how the church?

Mike Hoffman 22:15
Yeah. So when we talk about the church, and you know, whether we are 100% in, are you talking about the church that responds to racial injustice? Or, or are there other issues that you're that you're thinking of when you think about making changes in the world? I guess that's what I was asking.

Andrew Woolsey 22:34
Yeah, I think definitely racial justice should be a key factor in the future of the church. But I also think our church operates. How we go about what the idea of church like what is that in the future? Yeah, different, different problems in the world for sure, ideas need to be talked about and wasn't on, but just the idea of what are we I think needs to change too. Okay.

Mike Hoffman 23:02
Okay. Well thanks for that. So is there anything else you'd like to share about you, Graceland, or the church? The future?

Andrew Woolsey 23:11
Oh, man, let's see if anybody listening is high school age or you know younger, wants to know what kind of college they want to go to Graceland definitely is the one for you. You know, GU For You that whole idea. It's really a sense of togetherness here, which of course, is the idea together. But when you you know, growing up, I hear about Graceland. And you know, I wanted to be house president. And at the time, it was so cool. You get to be the leader of these people. Right? But now I look at it as oh my gosh, you get to help support your friends, that you may own this house. That's what the house is. It's not as this you know, a country, right? You're the leader of the people that you know, real people. And if they get if they vote you in you get to help them succeed in their lives. It's just so cool to me. That's the opportunity that Graceland offers to so many people.

Mike Hoffman 24:07
Oh, absolutely. Well, are you planning to run for president at the end of this year?

Andrew Woolsey 24:13
Sure am!
Mike Hoffman 24:15
That would be a house president for next year. That's good, that's a great leadership position. Like you said, working with friends, but it also, it's a lot of responsibilities too. So I wish you well in that, that's pretty exciting to do that. And I especially like your invitation that other students that are in high school, it's a person supposed to do so. I did not go here as an undergraduate but I, you know, like, it's interesting. I didn't even know what a liberal arts university was until I got here, but it's, it is so appealing to who I become that it makes sense that, it makes sense that it would be a really attractive and a really good fit with a lot of students who are, who are like you in Community of Christ and you know, want to do ministry wants to change the world and to do all those things.

Andrew Woolsey 25:07
And the whole liberal arts, liberal arts idea, I know for some is tough. But me coming in knowing that I wanted to do history, I'm able to take like, say arts classes that relate to history, you know, or science classes that relate to history. So like, it all makes sense to me classes that I'm taking. And so it's cool, I get to have my field but in different areas and see how it plays out in the world and different aspects.

Mike Hoffman 25:30
Yeah. It's a really intriguing idea. Even though I didn't go to a liberal arts university, I think it would have been a really cool experience. Very good. Well, Andrew Wilson, thank you for visiting with me today.

Andrew Woolsey 25:44
Thank you for having me.

Mike Hoffman 25:45
Absolutely. And I look forward to continuing to work with you over the next year or until you graduate and then go change the world to a better place. Thanks, Andrew. Thank you.

Josh Mangelson 25:58
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