

334 | Percolating on Faith | Introduction to Community of Christ Theologians Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 00:17

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

Carla Long 00:34

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast on your host, Carla Long. And, as always with our percolating on faith series I have with me Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith. Hello, Charmaine! Hello, Tony!

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 00:46

Hello,

Tony Chvala-Smith 00:47

Hi Carla!

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 00:47

Good to be here with you. It's so good to see you guys. And, um, so today we're doing kind of a little bit of a different type of Percolating on Faith, we're going to open a new series if you didn't believe me and Charmaine might not be doing every one of these podcasts in this series, but I'm actually pretty excited about it. And we're gonna be talking about different Community of Christ theologians. And this actual podcast is called A Century.--wait, what is it called? Yeah, yeah, that's good.

Carla Long 01:22

A Century of Community of Christ theologians. Because some people might say, "Hey, this is a super small church! And, you know, you guys can't have theologians." But we do! We do and we've got a lot of them. So Tony, Charmaine, just because I pointed my finger at the listeners, right just now, now we have to back that up. So before we jump into that, though, so what do we mean exactly when we say theology? And what do we mean by a theologian? Because people might have assumptions and they're, like, completely wrong. So let's,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:01

Yeah let's get people on the right track. Alright, so first, theology. And it's a good thing to define, because there's really at least two different ways of understanding what theology is, on the one hand, it is a process, it's something that we, that is going somewhere the theology is the thinking through, the working with ideas, the tossing them back and forth, the living into them. So there's, theology is this process, this action that we do together. But theology is also, Tony likes to say it's the process and the product. So theology is also a set of beliefs and ideas and concepts, that that we recognize as having some consistency, and having something that holds together. And though that may change at any given time, an individual or denomination or group is likely to have a working theology, a theology of

ideas, the meaning ideas, those things we hold. So the thing that we build, and there's the thing that we hold, so theology is both.

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:22

So Charmaine likes to make a distinction between doing theology, which is the process and having a theology which is a result.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:33

Oh I like that one. Oh that's mine?!

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:35

I'm quoting you, dear. (laughter)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:37

We're quoting each other! (laughter)

Carla Long 03:37

You two we are adorable!

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:39

We've been together way too long!

Josh Mangelson 03:51

We quote each other, hopefully, on these podcasts, we never have to wipe anything off each other's faces.

Carla Long 03:58

Well, if you do that just means you're you've been married for however long I get it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:03

I think it's kind of like, you know, moms who, even when their kids are grown, you know, try to clean their faces.

Carla Long 04:10

I, I've definitely done that. Anyway, back to the theology.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:14

Theology!

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:14

So doing theology Charmaine just described as this process and, and we love We love the definition of theology from St. Anselm. It's faith seeking, understanding. So, faith or being or in some kind of relationship of trust with the ultimate, the seeking is, I want to explore I want to understand I want to go deeper and deeper into that. Understanding then becomes, how do I articulate it? Right? So So yeah,

so the product is articulated the results of thinking through and seeking, and there's there's so many theologies over the course of Christian history because well time doesn't stand still, right? new new contexts, new experiences, new new situations to reengage Christian faith in that in that particular time. So there's there's always change and developments.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:13

There's always change and development. And then at some pivotal moments, there's also often a great deal of argument and dissension. And, you know, in those moments when new growth is required that the world has changed, and something has to change, that, that's another part of the doing theology is, is there's usually some conflict involved.

Josh Mangelson 05:39

Yeah, you can actually see that right, in the Bible itself. different traditions, for example, in the Hebrew Bible, different traditions, in a sense in a conversation or argument with each other about why do things happen the way they do? Did Yahweh do it? Did our messing up, do it? Do they just happen? Is there is guilt transferred from generation to generation? Or is it on the individual? So theological argument and dissension disagreement is present in the Bible, of course, it's definitely present in the New Testament. So yeah, that that's, that's part of the human process of all this. Religion, religion does not exist in a vacuum. that that would be the religion of Hoover, and it's dead because there's nothing there's nothing actually going on there, right? So, so

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:33

A vacuum? Geeze.... (laughter) Alright.

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:38

So, theologians. Who is the Theologian? Alright, so we want to say for this series that we, we tend, we tend to be somewhat broad and generous when we use the term theologian. We don't, I mean, yeah, Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant theologian. St. Agustin was a brilliant theologian, Martin Luther was a brilliant theologian. You know, gosh, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza brilliant theologian, all these people in their own way professionally trained. But anybody who thinks and reflects on how to articulate their faith is acting as a theologian. And so when we, when we start looking at Community of Christ's story, we can apply the term theologian to a lot of people. And that would be the same in other church's stories, too. There are way more theologians active in any given church than just than just the PhD theologians, so. So we want to be generous about that. And so will, as we look over theologians, from the past century or so, and Community of Christ, we want to focus on people who had some kind of enduring contribution or some kind of that, they were right for their moment in terms of articulating the church's faith at that time. So that's how we'll, we'll treat the term.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:01

So as as we go through, we'll identify those who've had formal education, and those who haven't. But to our minds, at least, the formal education does not make someone a better theologian, it might make them a more informed theologian on some pieces, but but it doesn't necessarily make them more authoritative or, you know, quality religion.

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:32

We were kind of egalitarian about that. And I think in both of our experiences, we can think of individuals in our in our personal journeys, who didn't have what we would call formal theological training, but who were really significant theological voices to us at a particular moment in our lives. They were able to help us understand the faith in a way that was meaningful at that moment. So that that qualifies them so so it's going to be a pretty big net that will we'll use in this in this series. So yes, that's that's where we're going in this century of Community of Christ theologians.

Carla Long 09:16

So, um, this is probably the most important question I'm gonna ask all day. So you would consider Carla Long a theologian to right?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:23

Absolutely.

Carla Long 09:24

That's what I thought you were going to say!

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:28

And a really good one to become because she's not only got some educational qualifications, but she also is a practitioner,

Carla Long 09:37

And is humble.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:40

(laughter) Sure.

Carla Long 09:45

Thank you so much. That was the most important question. These are lesser important questions.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:50

Right. Okay.

Carla Long 09:51

So what would you say that like these theologians would have different emphases as they're going through or the same of emphases and like, what is there anything that's consistent in within them?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:05

Yeah. I mean, when we start talking about specific ones, Tony and I were talking about this earlier, it's like, you know, we're looking at people like Marietta Walker, who, you know, was was still actively involved in the in producing things. And her effect was, was even further on from when she was actually writing and presenting things. But she was basically from the 18--what do we say her?

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:37

She joins the church in the 1860's. 1865 or so?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:40

Until the 1920s. And so that's why we're kind of well she's sneaking in under the line. But there's a lot of things that she would have said that we would have said, "Oh, my goodness, no, no, no, no, we don't believe those things anymore." And but there were some things that she upheld, both in her writing, and in how she lived, they have been, and that is the idea that, that women have something to offer, that women experience the spirit, and a sense of call equally to men, that that women should have full voice in the church. So there's an egalitarian part of who she is. Another piece, and this would, you know, take a more deep study, but she she brought a lot of mainstream Christian ideas to our wacky little group of people, and really helped to bring, you know, it's like, bringing balance in, in materials that she wrote. And she she wrote, yes, she wrote stuff for children. But she also wrote a Compendium.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:59

She and Henry Stephens wrote this Compendium of the Scriptures kind of a big giant book of proof texts. Yeah. So we shall and and I think, you know, next in our next podcast, we'll talk about Marietta Walker and Fred Smith, together as because they're kind of in that same vein, right, roughly in that same time period.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:22

So she's, she's bringing scholarship. She's, so there's that that honesty that comes with scholarship up. But you know, she's living in a time when we were the one true church. And she was going to do her darndest to help lift up that element as well. So that part we might not even, that's part that we wouldn't we would say, yeah, that that was for its time, it was important. But it's not something that we would promote today. That's not who we are now. But there are some things and that is language about who is Christ? What does it mean to follow Christ? You'll see that through her all of her materials, and again, those other pieces, where she challenged the institution, when it came to the role of women, and taking, taking people seriously, who might not be white male. And so anyhow, so there's those things that are coming through it, even though the specifics of some of the things she would have promoted or upheld, would not be relevant today.

Josh Mangelson 13:34

So if you you know, if you look in terms of broad themes, and you say, the Enduring Principles, Marietta Walker was a pioneer on the Enduring Principles of Develop Disciples to Serve, she was deeply engaged in the church school movement of the late 1800s. That was affecting all kinds of churches, Sunday school movement, and, and so if we, if we use if we look, look for Enduring Principles, we will find,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:04

Or Mission Initiatives

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:04

Or Mission Initiatives, we will find rep representations of these in all of these figures, some more, some less, but, but that's, that's where I mean, that's where you can say, you see the consistent threads through time. That's why they're called Enduring Principles, actually.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:23

Fred M. Smith, who was the president of the church, from about

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:28

1914 to 1946

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:29

1946, somewhere in there until, 1946. So he, he, his areas of study were sociology, and late

Josh Mangelson 14:46

Oh, he did his PhD in psychology. So yeah, so he was up on the latest psychology and sociology of the day and in the very early 1900s.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:56

And so again, this is still a timeline Churches the one true church. And there's several things that he's going to be promoting that that hat that he's received. But he's also very outspoken about the church's need to be involved in causes in, in the society that change the society, that that are for the good of all. That stand up for workers and a living wage that bring justice into everyday life. And so, so that's a piece that definitely influenced not only the people in his time, some of whom were like, talking about politics, that's, that's, you know, separate separate these things out. But he's, he's making those connections about what makes for peace and justice, as we understand, as we understood it at the time, but that's consistent and it affected future leaders in the church to start looking wider as to what is it God may be asking us to do not just to have safe little congregations where we're drawing people in, but that those affect the world.

Josh Mangelson 16:15

So, you know, when you look at these broad themes, then you begin to see consistent threads through the churches, theological history. But when you look, when you when you take the deep dive, you know, with any given figure in their time, you see how much they are in meshed in their context. And, and think, like people in the context think. And so that's where we find stuff that is not necessarily may not that may not ring true with us today, that we say, you know, this is the place where we're reading Marietta's mail, and it really has nothing to do with us. So So yeah, this is, is we, we do historical theology like this, we're always, we're always thinking about this, it's kind of an integral, integral dialectical relationship between how everything they say is embedded in its own time. And yet, because of the because of the stream of thought they're drawing from, they're able to also say things here and there that speak beyond their time, even to us today. So that's one of the things we'll be looking for as we explore different figures.

Carla Long 17:24

Oh, that's really interesting. I like hearing about like, um, do people like Mariana Walker and Fred Smith, like, do they hang out with God? Do they get these theology that they're learning from the scriptures? Like, where would they get it?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:41

Good point.

Josh Mangelson 17:44

Nobody's theology has dropped from heaven. I hope that doesn't shock anybody. Nobody, nobody's heaven came, or nobody's theology came straight from above. Not even Joseph Smith Jr's, Joseph Jr's theology

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:56

Maybe especially not. (laughter)

Tony Chvala-Smith 17:59

There's a lot of stuff in Joseph's, yeah, there's a lot of stuff there, but now that we have to give ourselves, take a deep breath on. But no, nobody's theology in the history of Christian thought comes directly from God, it's always a mix of various sources and voices and experiences. And yet, Carla, if you want to pull up the we, we've used this, before in recent recent podcasts, but these things that we call the four voices of Christian theology are four sources: scripture, tradition, experience, reason. And every, everybody's theology has all four of these at work in them. Some, some better, some worse, some, you know, for richer, for poorer. But no theology lacks these, the interchange between these four elements. And so that's, you know, that that, Joseph Smith Jr's theology, for example, is a mix of King James Bible stuff, as it was interpreted and understood within the tradition of revivalism on the American frontier, filtered through recent cultural experience of the Second Great Awakening. And then their, their, their reasoning, you know, is it's it's frontier reasoning. They reason from all these things and draw conclusions from it. They have limited access to the best current science or the best current understanding of history. They work with what they have. And so, yeah, so theology is always a human product. And there, therefore, it's always in need of revision, rethinking, we always have to go back and and start over and think it through again, which is, by the way, a unique characteristic of reorganization Community of Christ theology, because our tradition emerged partly out of a sense of dissent towards the many different ways that Joseph Smith's theology, especially by the Nauvoo period, was, was seen as a major train derailment.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:17

So, yeah, so we would say each of the theologians that will, that we'll be talking about, will have drawn from these four voices. But we also, as much as we would say, these things just don't get dropped down from heaven, we do believe that God can reach us can speak to us through each of these four voices. And, and so each of them would have seen that differently. So going back to, to Fred M, you know, for him, one of the voices of experience would, which would have been his cultural context, at the time, is this new social gospel movement, that he would have recognized, he would have sensed as God's self revealing in this in his time, of helping people see more clearly the injustices that our

systems were imposing upon, specially the poor, and those who were laborers who had no voice, and with the inequity of those who already had power, using and abusing it, for their own benefit. So So, you know, he sense that he sensed the Spirit speaking through the social gospel movement, and, and let that shape his voice and his challenge to the church. So that's that those four voices are always there, something greater in some and lesser degree for each individual. But those are, those are constantly changing with our contexts, too.

Tony Chvala-Smith 22:02

Yeah, absolutely. So So I, you know, one of our goals for this series is, we want to introduce hearers heroes and or watchers of this series, to people who've had some kind of formative influence on Community of Christ. Community of Christ didn't just, we didn't just appear under a mushroom in, you know, the year 2000, we were connected to a long stream of, of development and tradition, and many different things feed into who we are. So understanding our theological past and where we've come from, is really important. And a good way to do it is to like, look at the contributions of different figures, see what they had to say what they did, what their instincts were, what they hoped for, what they were seeking, and see how that may have fed into who we are.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:59

And so some people might say, I don't know, you might even ask the question. So why are we talking about people from 100 years ago?

Carla Long 23:08

Well, I hate to admit it, but I was definitely thinking it like eh? So why should we talk about people from 100 years ago?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:16

Yeah. And and that's because influence builds. Influence, it shifts, and sometimes it's like a snowball, and it picks up more influence as it goes along. And so that's part of the reason why we wanted to do it for that kind of a period of time, is partly that. And the other reason is that it's talking earlier about these these moments in history, whether it's an individual's history or an organization's history, where everything comes into question. And so one of those places for us was, was, you know, 1860, when the church is trying to reorganize. Some have gone west, and there's other small little groups everywhere. And then there's the what will eventually be called the reorganization, who are trying to pull ideas together and there is debating and there is disagreement, and sometimes the only thing they have in common is that they all think Joseph messed up on something they might have not even met agree on what it was he messed up on. But they agree that that they need to cling together. But that was a very important time for this ferment of ideas of the sorting of the sifting of throwing some things out and drawing some other pieces into bring balance. So that was one time. But the next time that was that has been super critical to the church, is this time time starting in the 40s, and 50s, really coming into bloom in the 60s and 70s. 1960s and 70s. And, and so we wanted a little bit about what led into that what was the church like before that, theologically than what happened in that 60-70s? And how did it propel us really in not a completely different way, because there's still all those themes running through. But in a, in a way we hadn't expected. Let's put it that way. And so that's the 60s and 70s. And so we want to be able to get some of those voices in the 60s and 70s and 80s, who started articulating and

challenge challenging where we've been, and saying, this is a new time, it doesn't work. Some of the things that we used to do, that we used to claim that we used to be about, that's not what's needed. That's not what we're being called to. And so those sometimes very brave voices, that took a lot of risks, and got a lot of pushback. Another time, where there was conflict. And you can see that, you know, it really the conflict becomes very visible with in the time of ordination of women in 1984 to 86 ish. But it had been building for a long time. And that was kind of the that one big thing that helped us to let go of some things and to embrace some things as we went forward. So we want to look at some of the people during that time, who forced? Invited? Drew? the church into this a new way of understanding who we are in relation to God and to each other.

Josh Mangelson 27:05

I mean, it's it's a fair question, no. Why? Why should Why should we pay any attention to old dead people? Yeah, I suppose I could ask Carla, Charmaine and I are a generation older than you. Why would you talk to us?

Carla Long 27:21

That's an excellent point.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:25

Now that you mentioned,

Carla Long 27:28

No, please continue. Keep going.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:30

I think, though, you know, a gentle push back on the assumption of the question is that somehow today is not connected to yesterday? And, you know, No, nobody looks at a tree, and just looks at the new growth at the end of it. Right? You look at the whole tree. And the the new growth is definitely connected to what, what came before. And the same way in theology. It's, I mean, yeah, there's lots of exciting stuff going on with theology today. And, and Christian thought is able is able to go places today, it's never been able to go, for example, like on LGBTQIA issues. But if it had not been for the rise of, of the critical scientific study of the Bible, in the 1800s, and even earlier, we wouldn't have had the tools to enable us to get beyond that kind of very literalistic use of the Bible, so that was so common, it's still so common in so many places. So in other words, so in other words, that we're able to do things today, theologically and ethically, that our ancestors weren't because, because of but but we can do it because of tools they invented. And so that's why that's one reason why it's really important to explore the theological past, we'll find our will find our ourselves there, and we'll find our connections there. You know, recently, we've been in the United States, we've been, we're in the centenary of women's right to vote. And it's absolutely fascinating to go back and explore the suffrage movement, and see the sacrifices. I mean, these are these are women who had this vision of what ought to be. And so it's very inspiring then for women now, to realize that the kinds of things that like an Elizabeth Cady Stanton did, you know, to help make that a reality. So, um,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:23

But also to recognize the kind of conflict there were between people who all knew that they needed to move forward, but wanted to do it in different ways. And actually, it ended up in, in this case for the vote for women, it really required both kinds of approaches to help to help something new happen, but But yeah, again, it's that there's these vital moments where our theology, we have to figure out what is the core of our theology and what are the, what are the movable pieces? How can you know? It's like, Well, how do we learn to accessorize for the new season? Right? much? Yeah, I should. That's probably, we'll it'll work. But we need to know what is our core, you know, what, what is what will, what will hang on to what's classical what's what helps us stay connected to God. But there's a lot of pieces that have have new challenges before them to address.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:37

An assignment we have our seminar students do in our history of Christian thought one class, which is ancient and medieval theology is, it's a spiritual, it's a spiritual formational practice. So we have them do and that is, at the start of semester they, we give them a list of mystics, from the early, early to the high Middle Ages. And we asked them to pick one, and then they do a kind of prayer journal Lectio Divina with that mystic throughout the duration of the course. It is amazing. It's amazing how many of our seminary students come back and say, that assignment of praying with a mystic, I mean, somebody from the 12th century, wherever it's like, who, I mean, gosh, they didn't even have fleet collars, then Carla, and they, and they really needed them, right? So but somebody from the 12th century, whose encounter with God, while in many ways very different, the language is very different. But their encounter with God is so real and vital that across the centuries, that encounter still inspires and empowers and enables 21st century postmodern people to seek God too. So yeah, so there's, there's, you know, we we have to we'll have to make the case as we go. And there's going to, we're going to look at figures and we're going to say, you know, this was the best of times, and this was the worst of times. So that's all right, right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:01

So if you want to pull up the other slide, we'll just kind of introduce people to a few of these names. There we go. So theologians to note, we've already talked about Marietta Walker and Fred M. Smith, who was the president of the church in case we didn't mention that. And then, in the 30s, to the 70s, at F Henry Edwards, who did not have a lot of formal education in theology, but was a natural theologian, and just were an

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:42

Extraordinarily well read.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:43

So well read and so articulate. He, he wrote a lot of things throughout his life, some that that really connected with people in the early times of his writing. So in the 30s, he wrote something called Fundamentals that, that kind of carry the old theology of the church, and that's okay.

Carla Long 33:13

Okay, I'll bring them back. I was actually thinking, though, I read have F Henry Edwards once and I was like, I understand anything. This guy's so hard, I'm going to bring that back.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:24

Okay, good. So I mean, his, his approach spans some really critical years. So he's he in fundamentals, he's kind of, I want to say regurgitating, there we go. The, the old theology, the theology that preceded him, he just was very good at articulating it. But by the end of his writing, career, he, he's writing more on spiritual formation. And there's nothing in there that about us being the one true church. He's drawing from all kinds of writers, both in theology and in world religions, to talk about spiritual formation. And so he spends this really critical time, where, as a church for we're letting go of some things. And we're recognizing that God can do something with us that that we didn't, we didn't imagine. (To Tony) Did you want to say anything more about him?

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:30

He'll be interesting to look at. And he's an example of how a theologian changes her or his mind over time. And that that's a process of growth. It's very amazing to see him so we'll do, we'll spend some time with Roy Cheville. And one of these on Roy Cheville, who is actually formally trained he had master and and doctoral degrees in religion from University of Chicago. And so he he represents an actual engagement of an RLDS thinker with liberal Protestant theology from that period from early, early 20th century. And, and he he's, he was very influential in the church, for that period that we have there 30s to the 60s. He wrote, wrote dozens of books, literally hundreds of articles, a household name in the church, and very, very, very much an articulator of faith.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:28

But he's so interesting, because he, well, this is just, this is just me, I think he did a little bit of frankensteining of theology. So he kept some things that he would have learned when he first joined the church. So some of that older theology, but it's really fascinating to see what are the new pieces he added in while trying not to let go of things. And it's, he's, he's just a fascinating person, to, to, to do his reading, because you'll see he's bringing in modern influences of science and education, and like space, travel, all of those kinds of things. And yet, also hanging on to some of those older things that didn't necessarily seem to be compatible. But he had personally found a way to connect them to let them coexist. And he didn't always understand how others didn't see that they coexisted. So he's fascinating. He was very influential at Graceland University, which was the churches University, starting in 19...

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:43

Oh, gosh. 30's, actually.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:46

Okay. Yeah. So but he was he was there for a long time at Graceland. And so he influenced the theology of people, young people who are just getting introduced to the idea of theology. And he was a questioner, he introduced always with his students the idea they needed to question the faith that they

had inherited. And it was just very uncomfortable for many, many people. So he's a very intriguing character. And then he was the presiding evangelist for the church, as well.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:24

So yeah, very, very influential person. I mean, you this is an example of where you could say, the fact that Community of Christ today is in most many places, not mostly, but in many places in the world, we're very open to the critical analysis of religion, and theology, that's part a legacy of Roy Cheville. He introduced that into church life.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:45

So that we have on this list, some that someone that's, you know, we kind of went back and forth on whether or not he was should be on this list. His name is Arthur Oakman. He came from England, again, not formally trained, but like F. Henry Edwards, widely read. And so there's the two sides of Arthur Oakman. He was an Apostle in the church. He was well known for his sermons. very influential speaker. And, and you can see in him this, this conflict between the old theology and these people he's reading, who are who are Anglicans in the modern age, and who he's quoting freely, but not necessarily footnoting. And so, you can see this is kind of a surreptitious development in the in his own theology, but it's affecting those around him as well. He actually was someone who in the 60s and 70s, at that pivotal point, when there's that conflict in a new direction, he's he actually has some difficulty with that. And those who, who were naturally having difficulties in the 70s and 80s, often harked back to him, as somebody who had upheld the faith, not like these new leaders who are taking us off into these unknown regions. And so, we can see within him that conflict of that time of holding on to these things that had made God so real to him and helped him make God real to others. And these new things that might mean you had to let go some things so,

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:47

So with him will be interesting for us to talk about his his use of classical Christian themes. So Aurther Oakman articulated very well, the church's Trinitarian faith. And that was because she got help from those Anglicans.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:05

Those darn Anglicans! (laughter)

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:06

So with both Edwards and Oakman, we'll have to talk about what we like to call the Anglican connection. So yeah, they both came from England. And so that influenced their theological thinking.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:16

So then we have the 1960s on and I just have "BOOM", because this is a point at which independent of each other people are feeling called to go to seminary, to take religion classes in their state universities to start questioning. And of course, this the 60s and 70s are a critical time in US history where a lot of institutions are being questioned. And so that's true within the church as well. And and people are feeling called to go outside of the church to gain knowledge and insight, including church leaders, who had people from St. Paul School of Theology, Methodist seminary, come and teach. So we've just

named a few of the people who felt this call. Bill Russell, who's is a teacher at Graceland, until his retirement. and beyond. Harold Schneebeck , who was a young theologian, he was training at Union Seminary in New York, and wrote an influential book in the church in about 66-67 that disturbed almost everybody at that reunion that summer that because that was the textbook, and, and yet, it's when we were looking at books for our Community of Christ theology class, Grant MacMurray, who was the president of the church at the time, suggested Harold Schneebeck, The Body of Christ. And we have used it since and, and in that book, he's, he's describing pretty well, a church that would not emerge until about 40 years later. But he's he is describing and giving some groundwork for how we would talk about and see ourselves 40 years later.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:19

So it's literally he wrote a book in 68 that's the blueprint of Community of Christ. So that's pretty important.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:25

Sharon Welch, Howard Booth, Marge Troeh, Marge Troeh's the women's leader in the church and challenged leaders and the church as a whole, to deal with the question of, in a theological way, as well as in a justice way of what is women's role in the church, Bob Mesle, who is a process theologian, and taught at Graceland, Helen Brew Pearson, who is a church member, who felt this call to going to seminary and then doing her doctorate as well, who is now a United Church of Christ minister, but who's whose response to the call, and articulation of that influence Richard Howard, who's, who's a historian, and yet he he knew how to tie history and theology together and does in his in all almost everything he touches, though he would not necessarily call himself a theologian. He's affected the theology of the church, in impressive ways. Barbara Higdon, who is a president at Graceland University, but also taught classes on preaching, and use of scripture. Bruce Lindgren, another one of those who early on, went to seminary, and he was the church secretary for decades.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:03

He's retired now.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:04

Barbara Howard, who worked at Herald House, became a writer, but was also an editor. Again, challenging the status quo. and inviting people to read more broadly understand God as something more. Geoffrey Spencer who was an Apostle from Australia. And who's, I forget how many hymns are in this in the hymnal that he wrote.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:36

Brilliant, brilliant, theological mind. And he had, he had some formal theological training to as did Peter Judd, the next one in the list, Peter, who is in the presidency, and Peter, who is still doing lots of doing lots of writing and editing today.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:49

So and we know we're missing all kinds of names in here. So this is not any kind of a complete list, but it's giving you a little sense of these different people who sense this call to let theology be something

more than just those things you that were passed on to you, and you repeated and carried on. So we have Grant McMurray, who was the president of church, Carolyn Brock, who integrated help the church to become more aware of spiritual formation, and the language that she brought the practices she brought, the idea of choosing to connect with God making doors open, to be present to God and God to be present to us is it's changed our way of talking and thinking in the church in ways that that aren't measurable, but that are still present. Don Compier, who was the first dean of the seminary, the Community of Christ Graceland Seminary.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:53

PhD in theology. Yeah. From from Emory is he's an Episcopalian priest, and absolutely brilliant theologian, and was our boss and our colleague.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:08

Janes Gardner, who has written a lot on sacraments, and is the is presently the presiding evangelist of the church, and who's whose energy helped create the new, the new hymnal that we have, which is so full of theology that calls us forward into who we can be in peace and justice, but also with that deep and solid, center around the the nature and work of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

Carla Long 46:48

So a lot of people would say that we sing into our theology.

Tony Chvala-Smith 46:52

That's absolutely, right. Yeah,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:55

Exactly. You know, the theology and our hymns is what's calling us forward. It's the it's the theology we're wanting to make room for.

Tony Chvala-Smith 47:04

Matt, Matt Frizzell, who was the dean of Community of Christ Seminary, Matt is trained as a theological ethicist, and currently works as the Human Resources Director of the church. But But Matt, Matt has a very vigorous, vigorous voice for contemporary theology and ethics. And then, of course, President Steve Veazey, who is himself very theologically reflective and sophisticated. And you can, you can always hear that in his sermons, I always can hear his deep theological mind at work in his sermons.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:35

And of course, you know, Carla Long and Robin Linkhart, those names are, they're all there too. And this, and that's, that's going to be part of the hard part of this series is to, to identify but the main, the main goal is to say, how has this person and the way that they have talked about, about their faith about the purpose of the church about who God is, and what God invites us as a community to be a part of? It's how they do that, that has the influence. And so that's the only thing that really needs to be connected is, how does this person's living of their theology and thinking about their faith? influence the church? So that'll be the two pieces.

Josh Mangelson 48:30

And I don't think we're promising that we're going to cover absolutely every single figure.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:33

Oh, no.

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:35

Because that'll take us like, I don't know, 12 years of podcast Carla, we're not going to do that. But, but the idea is, we do want to highlight some different figures. And we were talking earlier about, should we just maybe pick dead figures, because if we start picking living figures, then the ones that we don't or don't mention will feel left out. But we decided just to give a kind of

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:56

General idea.

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:58

A buffet table is way bigger than what we put out. But that's that's a that's a sampler of it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:02

We're assuming that that there will be 10 or less people covered.

Carla Long 49:08

Well, I'm excited about I think it's gonna be great. And I really, really think that two names were left off of there. Two kind of important names were left off of there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:16

Yeah, go ahead.

Carla Long 49:18

I think Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith! YOU were both theologians in residents for Community of Christ for years. So I'm going to say that perhaps you might have an important voice in Community of Christ theology. I mean, call me crazy.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:38

Well, I think probably we're looking at it as historians would add to say, sometimes you have to wait you know, a decade or two after they're not around anymore to see whether or not they had any lasting influence.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:51

You know, you try to quote mark to quote a lovely Monty Python line. You can do us because we're not dead yet.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:00

But most of the people in the bottom part of the list, either so.

Carla Long 50:05

Well, I just I feel like I need to throw those in there. Maybe I can interview someone else about you two.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:10

Oh, why don't you interview? Why don't you could maybe interview yourself about us? That could be interesting?

Carla Long 50:19

Are you sure you want that?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:22

I'm sure it would be entertaining.

Carla Long 50:25

Oh, it would! Well, this actually, the list sounds really exciting to me. And just, I, you know, there's they're all names that I've heard before, of course, and I know a lot about a lot of these people. But I don't think I know what their contribution to Community Christ theology was necessarily I, you know, like I said, I've read Fundamentals by F Henry Edwards, but I don't think I understood half of it, or a quarter of it. It was deep, deep stuff. And so I'm really curious to like, maybe have that overview of what F Henry Edwards offered us and so on and so forth. And Arthur Oakman. I think that somebody had a record of his sermons at one point, like, I think a record, I think is Richard Betts! Richard Oakman's sermons, I just like we're in the world, did you get this? So I'm curious about how they, you know, how they formed and shaped us as a people. And I always say, we stand on the shoulders of giants. And these are the giants that were standing on. The shoulders that we're standing on.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:31

Exactly, exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:33

Yeah. It's very, very important. And it's also you know, in Christian doctrine, there's this idea of that *communio sanctorum*, the communion of saints. And traditionally, that's, that's a reference to both the church as it is, and the church, that the church in heaven. That it is all who've gone before us, together with us make up the church, it's not just the living who make up the church. And so I think that's a way to think about all of this, that we are, we are in communion with people who have gone before us. And so they still matter, they still, they're still impacting us in ways that we know in ways we don't know.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:13

And even if we don't necessarily agree with everything that they said, they said some things that are really important time, that then influenced other things that needed to be thought or said, or be attuned to, that, that the Spirit was drawing us towards.

Carla Long 52:33

Well, I'm excited!

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:34

We are too!

Carla Long 52:37

Um, okay, well, is there anything else that we need to know before we, you know, jump into the series next time, so,

Tony Chvala-Smith 52:43

Not for next time, sometimes we there are some of these fingers, we may be able to recommend a book or two on when we are getting ready to do them. But for next time, we'll we're going to explore Marietta Walker and Fred M Smith a little more closely as as contributors to Community of Christ theological development. So that will be our theme for next time.

Carla Long 53:03

Well, that's exciting. I'm looking forward to it.

Josh Mangelson 53:12

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