

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 00:33

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long and today I'm welcoming Katie Harmon-McLaughlin. She has a really important job of the church, and I'm probably gonna mess up the title, so I'm totally gonna let her say what she does. I think she's the Spiritual Formation Minister. Is that correct, Katie?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 00:51

Really close! Spiritual Formation Specialist.

Carla Long 00:55

I was going to say Specialists!

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 00:56

That's the official title.

Carla Long 00:58

Specialist! Well, you already heard her voice. So she's pretty wonderful. So I'm going to let her do the rest of her introduction, since I don't want to mess up anymore. So Katie, tell us a little bit more about yourself.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 01:07

Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me today. I, as Carla mentioned, to have the privilege of working for Community of Christ. And my focus is Spiritual Formation Ministries. I'm the team lead of the World Church Spiritual Formation Team, my direct, our Community of Christ Spiritual Formation, and Companionship Program, which currently trains participants in spiritual formation from throughout the United States and Canada. And then I also just work on a number of other resources and retreat opportunities for Community of Christ.

Carla Long 01:39

That doesn't sound like a job that I would super enjoyed, but it actually sounds a little bit fun. Do you enjoy that job? Is it like, is it what you wanted to do?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 01:49

I love my job. There are days when I just feel like I need to pinch myself. Because of how lucky I feel, to be doing what I'm doing. I mean, essentially, I get to walk with people in their spiritual journeys. Walk with people walk with communities, through all the different moments of transition and transformation

and question and insight. And it's really an amazing place in ministry to be able to be a witness of the Spirit at work in people's lives.

Carla Long 02:21

We'll see you make it sound really good. That sounds like, when you talk about that, I'm reminded of my spiritual director that I had when I was living in California, and I had such warm and tender and wonderful feelings towards her. And when I went back to California, like five years later, I made sure to stop it and see her because even though we didn't know each other that long, I just felt like she knew a part of me that not a lot of people know. And so I, you're right, that would be a wonderful, you're right. That's a wonderful experience. Thank you for sharing that. And for bringing back wonderful memories of Ruth. She's fantastic. Katie, we're going to talk a little bit about discernment today and some of the discernment resources that Community of Christ has to offer. But before we jump into the resources, can you talk to me about your definition of discernment, like what is discernment? How do you define discernment? All that.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 03:08

So discernment is, in some ways, very simple. It is aligning our lives with the call of God or seeking God in all things. And it can be a daily posture of life, just trying to be more open to God, where where does your spirit lead today, in the words of the mission prayer that so many are familiar with is a posture of discernment. But discernment can also be a process that individuals and communities can engage in times of decision making, when they are trying to align their vision mission identity with the deepest call of God for their lives.

Carla Long 03:53

That sounds hard. It sounds hard and easy all at the same time, actually.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 03:58

Yeah, I think that's pretty accurate.

Carla Long 04:01

And I don't know if this has anything to do with it. But I think I saw you write on Facebook or Instagram about your daughter, and how you're doing like spiritual practices with your daughter. So this isn't just like an adult thing. This can be a children's thing, too, right? Like at all ages kind of deal. Am I right about that?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 04:18

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I mean, I think discernment in its simplest form, is just trying to be more awake to God in our everyday lives. One of my one of my favorite discernment authors is Ruth Haley Barton. And in her book, Pursuing God's Will Together, she basically says, as disciples, if we are not regularly seeking the call of God in our lives, then what are we doing? What are we seeking? Whose call are we following? And I think that's a really helpful way to look at it that every day we're bombarded with messages and voices of people and products, telling us how we should be and what we should value and discernment is this process of sifting and distilling to find, what is the call of God in the midst of all these many voices that are clamoring for my attention? And how can I open my life in such a way that I

am more consistently awake to that call of God that is present in everyday life and follow it more intentionally and faithfully. So that can happen if you're three years old, and it can happen if you're 90 years old.

Carla Long 05:32

What you just said, really just just spoke to me the idea of sifting through those things because you're right, like TV bombards us, our friends bombard us. Our family bombards us, food bombards us with so many things to think about, and so many things that take up mental space that sifting through and finding that deepest part is, like I said, hard and easy all at the same time. I really appreciated that metaphor of sifting through and thanks for saying that. Why is discernment so important? One question, and why is discernment so important at all levels of the church? And by all levels? I mean, all ages, all groups, from the First Presidency to the Evangelists, so on and so forth. So why is the discernment important in the church? And why is it important at all levels of the church?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 06:21

That's a great question. Well, I think going back to what my friend Ruth Haley Barton, my friend isn't I've read her books, not as I know her personally. But what Ruth Haley Barton says about if we're not discerning, then what are we doing? That's such a critical question for spiritual communities for congregations throughout levels of leadership in the church, like world church leadership council and the First Presidency. I think that as disciples of Jesus in the world, we want to do our best to faithfully live our best understanding of where Christ's mission, God's mission is leading us and discernment is really the practice that helps us live into that prophetic calling. So at every single level of the church, whether it's in our personal lives, in our congregations, and even as a world church body when we come together for events like World Conference and vote on important legislation that shapes the future direction of our denomination, discernment is that core practice that helps us exercise our prophetic impulse.

Carla Long 07:27

Wow. So it, I don't know if I want to say like this, but it sounds like if it happens at the grassroots, then it will move out into the church, like for World Conference, and it will speak to our leaders as well. Is that what you're saying? Is that what you're thinking?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 07:46

Yeah, I think so. I think that discernment is both a practice, but it's also a way of life. It's a habit that can be cultivated in us. And when we cultivate that habit of discernment on a daily basis, trying to do that sifting for that deepest call of God in our lives, then when we come to those big decision making moments, whether it's at a World Conference experience, or leaders of the church making decisions, or a congregation making a decision about who they feel called to be in their community, then that's when we really see the fruit of discernment ripen in us. Because we've been developing that habit all along. I also think it's really important to say that a lot of times when we go through a discernment process, we are expecting at the end to have a really clear answer, like, this is now everything you should be and everything you should do. Sometimes, maybe we get that level of clarity. But I also think it's important for us to remember that discernment is about seeking God. It's not about seeking a product or a particular response. As individuals and as faith communities, if we are continually aligning our lives

toward God, that is really the heart of discernment to try to live. It's like that question that we've been asking, "Are we moving closer to Jesus, the peaceful One?" That is absolutely a discernment question. It's saying in our everyday lives, attitudes and actions, are we moving closer to who it is that Jesus, the peaceful One invites us to be? So I don't know if that answers your question. But I do think it's important to remember that discernment is really about just trying to orient our whole selves more completely toward God's presence and everything.

Carla Long 09:37

In today's world that is answered driven and all that stuff, this really doesn't have a place at that table. Doesn't really doesn't seem like it doesn't mean because it feels like there's no and you can correct me if I'm wrong. There's no end to discernment. You never actually get to where you're, you never really get to someplace and say well I'm done. I don't have to do any more. Because there's always more to understand about who God is. There's always more to understand about, even ourselves. Actually, probably, there's no end. It's always about the journey.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 10:11

Yeah, I would say yes and no, that, in some ways, action is a very important part of discernment. Because we can be in a suspended state of prayer forever and never do anything with our faith. But discernment is that critical place where faith reflection needs action in the world for justice and peace. It is, like I said earlier, that practice that enables our prophetic impulse, I think faithful discernment will have an outcome of action, even if it's something that is minor in our everyday lives, even if the action is just simply a change of heart that causes us to be more compassionate about those around us. And yet, discernment never ends. Because our faith journey with God never ends. And in Community of Christ, we believe in continuing revelation, which means that God is always speaking, always revealing something new to us. And if we want to be awake to that amazing invitation of God that is constantly being revealed, and exercising our muscle of discernment is an important way for us to be able to do that. So discernment does lead to concrete actions in our lives and in the world. But it is also a cyclical process that keeps us growing more and more open and available to God in all conditions of life.

Carla Long 11:35

That's really good to hear. Because a state of suspended prayer sounds terrible to me.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 11:44

Well, yeah, I mean, that is kind of a thing. Some people listening have probably heard about different spiritual types. And we know that in a lot of our congregations, we have spiritual types, like some people who might find themselves in the mystic category, would probably love to be in a state of suspended prayer. And then we also have the Kingdom builder action types who want to get things done. And I think that discernment is this really amazing intersection for us in our faith that invites us into intentional prayer, but also leads to prophetic action in the world around us.

Carla Long 12:20

Well, I will say it with a lot of love in my heart. I have never understood a mistake ever. Katie, I don't know if you're mystic or not, but I've never understood a mystic. Which is why you need all types of people, right? We need all types. This discernment that we've been talking about this all around. How

do we practice it? What do we do? We've already said it's not a state of suspended prayer. But I'm assuming prayer has something to do with how we enter into the discernment process. Can we talk a little bit about that?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 12:52

A typical discernment process has multiple parts, and they may happen in a linear way or you may come to different parts at different times. Typically, when you're entering discernment, because you are trying to make a decision whether as an individual or community, you start by really clarifying what is at the heart of the matter that I am bringing to God for discernment. Sometimes the the very first thing we think it is that we're seeking, there might be something deeper underneath that, that we're invited to explore. Clarifying our question that we're bringing to discernment is an important beginning place. Usually, the next step in any discernment process is called the prayer for spiritual freedom or holy indifference. And that's usually a time where we become more aware of all those voices that we talked about earlier. What are the agendas, the assumptions, the expectations that are shaping me? And even what are the cultural norms that are shaping me what what do I assume is true because of my socioeconomic status, because of my race, my gender. It's really about noticing all of this stuff that clouds our view of reality, and of what God may be truly inviting of us in a situation. So in a, in a practice, or prayer of spiritual freedom, we pray just to become more conscious, more awake, of all of those things that are crowding our lives and keeping us from listening more freely and openly to the call of God in our lives. Like for example, I may have a really strong attachment to a situation turning out in a certain way, but in my community, that attachment is actually getting in the way of open discernment, rather than rather than helping. So going through that time of prayer is a really important way to begin a process because if we aren't truly open to God, then we aren't really discerning. And yet we do that with a lot of grace and gentleness because we know that we are human, and rarely do I say God help me be free of all of these things that are distracting me, and then boom, we're free. So spiritual freedom is something that we pray for continually throughout the process. And we recognize that it's something that grows in us over time, rather than usually just happens all at once. So anyway, we clarify the heart of the matter, we move to spiritual freedom. And then there are lots of different practices that we can engage personally and communally, as we are entering discernment. So typically, we might enter into a process where we try to gather as much information as possible about the situation at hand. And a great resource that the church has for that is Steve Veazey, these six lenses for discovering God's will that come out of his address Ways of Discovering God's will. And you can find that on the church website. And there's also an accompanying listening guide. So that's a really great way of looking through all these different lenses, scripture, common consent, personal community experience, just to give us this more holistic sense of what it looks like to seek God's vision or will for us from multiple angles in our lives. Looking at our history and tradition, but also at continuing revelation and where God is revealing something new. And then typically, after that period of trying to gather as much information as we can, not just intellectual information, but also information from our bodies and our relationships and our emotions. And our memories, we move into a period of sifting and testing where you just sort of noticed, you know, what is it about this that really feels right and true? And what are things that I can let go of in this process? And then that will lead us into a period of seeking confirmation. And then if it feels like "Wow, I've really discerned and an action here" and next step for us to take, then we move into that action. And if not, then you might return to earlier parts in the process. So that's a very succinct description of what a typical discernment process might look like. But there are lots of resources that

are available that outline that process in slightly different ways, and have specific practices for each part to move into that. Oh, this is so interesting.

Carla Long 14:11

So I'm going to go back and I'm going to ask you just a few questions about the each part, if a congregation where it was entering into discernment. What would be an example of a clarifying question that they that they might be asking themselves just to give us maybe an idea of what we're talking about here?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 17:43

I'll use maybe the most cliché example, which is, should we have chairs or pews in our sanctuary? Oh, the classic dilemma.

Carla Long 17:54

The next one would be the carpet though. The color of the carpet.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 17:56

Or the paint! Yes. So you know, maybe you come to discernment with this question that feels like a very kind of practical, straightforward matter. But underneath it, there is a deeper question about what is really the purpose of our sanctuary as a place of worship and mission? That helps us reframe the question away from our own preferences to "God, what do you desire from the space that we are privileged to steward?" And then that takes the focus away from me and my agenda and my opinions and my preferences? To "Wow, we have been blessed with this amazing physical building and what is God inviting us to do with it?" And then that might even lead us in directions that we didn't even want to consider, like, maybe God's asking us to sell the building, and not do chairs or pews at all. Or maybe there's something else that's coming up that feels urgent and compelling for us in a different part of our building. Or maybe we still get to the pew and the chair dilemma, but we come at it from a different angle of trying to be faithful to God's vision for our community, instead of just trying to navigate personal dynamics and preferences in congregational life.

Carla Long 19:15

Oh that is, that is so interesting, that that like a super concrete question like that, pews or chairs or pews or yahooza chairs, can lead into something more. So I was I was also thinking about, you know, the part with spiritual freedom and holy indifference that comes right after the clarifying the question. And I have, I'm assuming that just naming those things, is a really powerful tool. Because I know when I've done that, in my own life, it's been huge, but I'm thinking about other people that I've known, perhaps older people who might not have ever named those things like named how a woman might feel how a person of a different race might feel, or gender might feel and so on and so forth. So I feel like that is just such a powerful tool in this toolbox. And have you seen that happen, and you see, people just open up and like, go, "Whoa!" when that conversation happens.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 20:15

And I would say actually, what I experienced most commonly is people saying, "I sense how important this is, but I'm really struggling with letting things go." And that in and of itself, is a hugely important

thing to name. Especially in a community, it's as important for us to be aware of what we are letting go so that we can be more open to God as it is for us to name together, man, "I feel really attached to this outcome. I just need to name this to the community that I'm really feeling attached to this outcome." And then the community has the gift of being more aware of where everybody's at, as we move through the process. And we continue to just pray, God, openness, openness to you openness to each other openness to your life coming through us in ways that we have not yet perceived.

Carla Long 21:11

It also sounds like to me that if if we are doing this in the right way, then it's incredibly freeing. Like if someone's great grandfather built those pews and Gosh, darn it, we're keeping the pews. But if we enter into this process, and we allow God to enter, in effect, I guess make the decision for us. I don't know if he probably would never say it that way, then you can just be free of it. You can you don't have to carry around that hurt and that anger anymore. I seems like to me, I could be wrong about that.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 21:51

Yeah, and I think that's a great example of why cultivating a habit of discernment in a congregation is so important. Because otherwise, maybe you have a handful of people that have really, seriously faithfully discerned and then the rest of the congregation hasn't been involved in, you still could have a lot of hurt intention, in a process like that. But I think that really fruitful discernment engages the whole community in a way that we listen deeply to one another. We listen deeply to God, and yet has the power to be really liberating from our previous assumptions of what we thought had to happen, it can open up completely new vistas for us in terms of what is possible, and where God is leading. And also just add really quickly. I've worked with groups in discernment in a variety of settings. And I think sometimes we're really tempted to compartmentalize our own lives, and our congregational lives like this is the spiritual stuff that belongs in discernment. And this is the practical stuff of running an organization or managing the budget. And I think what's really important for us as disciples to recognize that they are all interconnected. And so there is nothing too small or too large for us to bring to discernment. We may not go through a discernment process about everything we do. Like we might not go through a discernment process every time we want to approve a congregational budget, but we can approach every aspect of our own lives and our congregational lives with a discerning attitude, then simply just pausing to say, God, what is your vision here? For us? That simple question, even in the midst of a business meeting, can just to help ground us in that habit of discernment that grows in us over time?

Carla Long 23:42

Even asking that question, and even hearing you say that question even changes me right now. Like, am I asking the questions that I want to know? Or? Or am I asking, am I trying to be open to those questions that other people might need to hear? And you answer, so on and so forth? So even hearing that question changes my mindset completely, when it comes to something like this even. It's amazing, the change that happens. We talked a little bit about clarifying the question, we talked about the whole indifference part. And then the next part was gathering information. And I appreciated that you said it had not only like, information, like physical information, but you know, like, how do our bodies feel about it? How do how are we emotionally feeling about it? So I think that's important information as well. I do think that we forget how smart our bodies are. And and we need to pay attention that like, for instance,

back to the chairs and pews. I mean, our bodies might say cheers are way more comfortable, FYI. So I think I think it's important for us to listen to our bodies. I don't know if you have anything more to say about that, but I think it's really I'm glad you said it.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 24:51

Yeah, no, I think that's true. And we actually encounter that a lot, even in Scripture cues that help us recognize when we're receiving information from the Holy Spirit from lots of different sources, like, I think about the disciples on the road to Emmaus. And they recognize the presence of Christ, because they noticed that their hearts were burning within them. And I think a lot of times, we get cues from our own bodies from our own beings that we often ignore. But heart burning within us, is definitely one of those discernment cues. And so is like, when you feel just really tight in your neck or your chest, that might be a sign to you that you're holding on to something or having a hard time letting something go. So I do think that our bodies can be an important source of information for us, as well as our emotions, our memories, discernment can be a time when lots of rich images can come up for us from Scripture, or from our own lives that can help bring new insight to an issue. So a lot of times it's we'll go through all the stuff you need to put down on paper, this is the information we need to know to make a decision. But then you also weigh that with what images from scripture come up, as we review this information? Are those inviting us to see this in a new way? Or, as I look at all this information, do I feel really energized by the possibilities? Or do I feel really like dead and like the sense of dread about oh, I don't want to go in that direction at all. So it's really about integrating and balancing all the different ways that spirit can speak in and through us and each other.

Carla Long 26:33

What an awesome explanation. Because I've definitely sat through meetings where I felt myself, I felt my shoulders up by my ears, and I'm like, Oh, I don't want to do this. And that I should listen to my body more. The fourth part that you talked about was the and I don't know if this is the name of it, the sifting and the testing. I don't know if I have a lot of questions about that, just are you just trying to like feel out? Continue to feel out the end? The answer, I don't know. If we pull, you probably don't use the word answer. What would you say?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 27:08

Yeah, the the next step forward, perhaps, and especially when you're in community, that can be a time to really listen deeply to where discernment is leading different people. So for example, you might actually just go around the circle and say, if we were all to answer the question for discernment right now, what would we say? And you listen in the community to common themes and patterns that are arising, or to areas of strong dissonance that you need to pay attention to. And so that, that's really that sifting piece is noticing what is coming up in us, and what feels like we're being invited to bring forward in the process? And if there are things that we're being invited to let go as we move along, because as we gather information from lots of different sources about our discernment question, we're going to have more on the table than we will need. So the sifting is that process of in all of this, what's most alive? Where is the Spirit of God most present in us? And in the information that we've been gathering so far?

Carla Long 28:15

I understand that a little bit better now. Thank you for explaining that. That's actually really helpful. And it was in this Oh, oh, no, I forgot to mention it was in the gathering information that you mentioned Steve Veazey's Ways of discovering God's Will or Discovering God's Will those six lenses and listeners, if you have not looked at that, that is really a fantastic way to make sure that you are getting a holistic view of that of that gathering information pieces. They're really good. Some of the lenses are Katie, you know them better than I continuing revelation. Is that one of them? Do you I don't remember all the rest of them.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 28:52

Oh, gosh, you're putting me on the spot. Just one or two rather? Yeah. Continuing revelation, common consent, scripture tradition, personal community experience.

Carla Long 29:03

No, I think you did, great.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 29:04

Did I get them all?

Carla Long 29:05

Um. Sure.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 29:06

And you should go to the website to make sure I listed them all!

Carla Long 29:10

No need to contact Katie if she didn't! No need!

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 29:14

It really it really is a terrific resource. Because just like we were talking about spiritual types, we all come into these processes, with very natural human tendencies and preferences. And it's a great way for us to be looking through all the lenses that matter to our face, recognizing that sometimes we might avoid or neglect something because it wouldn't be our preferred lens. But it's still important for us in community as we're understanding each other and to get a fuller vision of who God is inviting us to be.

Carla Long 29:46

That's very helpful. Thank you. I. I did want to bring that up because my next question does have to do with more resources that people can use or look at. Do we have some other resources on the website that people could check out if they're more interested in doing this on congregations On level or even a personal level, yeah, where can we look?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 30:04

Yes. So we do have a resource called Personal and Communal Discernment Guide. And you can find that by going to the website, and it's under the spiritual formation page. But I think we'll try to make a

link available to you, as well. And it is a workbook that is accompanied by four videos that were recorded by spiritual formation team members, who outline different parts of the discernment process. And each video is about six minutes long. So if you're a congregation wanting to learn more about discernment, or engage in discernment process, it's a really easy resource to walk through together to gain understanding and then to move into a discernment process that outlines all the steps lists lots of different practices that you can engage as you move through a process. Another great resource that is a little bit a little bit older, but still very relevant is called Yearning for God. And that's another one that you can find online that was written by Carolyn Brock. And Jane Gardner recently put together a resource, discernment resources for evangelists that you can also find online. And evangelists have a special interest in discernment. But those resources are certainly not limited to evangelists. And there's a great book list as part of that resource as well. We already mentioned Ways of Discovering God's will, where Steve Veazey in a video that I believe is about 20, to 25 minutes long talks about the importance of discernment and continuing revelation, and names, the six lenses and how we might engage those. And you can also download a listening guide that goes along with that if you want to use that for your own personal life, or in a congregation or community. And then we also have resources that we've created for previous World Conference experiences. So if you search discernment on the web, you'll find a number of articles, there was spiritual preparation for the 2016 World Conference that led us through a discernment process with words of counsel that the church was discerning together. So those are examples of how we might engage some of this. And then on top of that, I'll just mention that in our 2021 reunion resources, we do have an article coming out about discerning the topic of non violence, how to engage determined practices and principles as we reflect on non violence together. So those are all entry points to help get you started. And one of the things that I love doing in my role with the church is supporting communities that want to engage in discernment. And I'm always available to have a conversation and talk through how these resources might actually be helpful. Or if you don't find them helpful. What other ways there are to engage discernment where and how you are.

Carla Long 33:14

Whoa, I'm shocked. I have no idea. There's so many. I mean, I'm sure that there's lots lots more out there. But let me just make sure to repeat for our listeners to see if something really caught them make sure they understood sort of where they went. So they get to see of christ.org and type into the search bar, I use the search bar at sea of christ.org all the time. If I type in discernment or type in spiritual practices, which is a better way to get there, either one, I would say discernment, type in discernment. And that should take them to some difference, a few different things. So you talked about the Personal and Communal discernment Guide, which is has the four videos and talks about these four different steps and the Yearning for God, which has a beautiful like loom on the front of it. I think somebody's weaving on the front. That's what I'm picturing in my head, discernment for evangelists, which is kind of new ways of discovering God's Will from Steve Veazey. We went through some a discernment process for the 2016 World Conference. And that you can look at also in the 2021 reunion, something to look forward to when talking about discernment in regards to non violence. That will be really interesting, and I'm really already looking forward to that. Well, that's a wonderful list. I don't think I missed any. I hope I didn't miss anything. I wrote them down. Just a peek at it. Yeah. Okay. Well, Katie, this has just been really, really helpful, I think for, it does seem like it's just like this thing that kind of determines like this thing that floats around out there. And sometimes you can just like grab a piece out of it on the cloud. But having like four steps, helps to make it a little bit more concrete and like something that you

actually could handle rather than like this huge thing that you're never ever going to understand because sometimes I feel like people are just a little scared of that word. I feel like I'm a little bit scared of that word too. Just because I don't, I don't even know where to get started. But starting with a clarifying question is something that I think any congregation can do so and then, and then doing the next steps doing the spiritual freedom holy in difference, you know, like when you break it down like that, it just feels so much more doable. So I really appreciate you. Just talking about it in the way you've talked about it.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 35:25

Yeah, well, and I'll just add really quickly, that discernment is such a huge field of resources. And it's this amazing wisdom that's been passed on throughout the generations in our Christian heritage. And so as I was discovering it, for the first time, I thought, wow, I really wish I would have had access to this wealth of wisdom, like when I was in college and trying to make critical decisions about my life, for example, but if all of this feels super overwhelming, and it still feels like a cloud in the sky that you're trying to grasp, maybe one of the simplest things to come back to is the mission prayer. If you are a person who says the mission prayer on a regular basis, you are already living in discernment. If you have ever been a person who has been who has been asking at any point in life, what would God want me to do in this situation, you have already been engaging in discernment. discernment can handle the huge complexities of our lives. But it's also a practice that is very simple and accessible in the everyday moments of our life, relationships and discipleship. And so I really just want to end by encouraging people that it is something very tangible and practical. That might simply start for us by saying, God, where does your spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.

Carla Long 36:55

I yeah, I think that's a wonderful place to close off this podcast. I I feel like you've just made it so much more accessible. And I really appreciate Katie, spending time and taking time and explaining that to us. It's just been a really wonderful podcast for me I I'm actually really energized by this. And I've already thought about ways that can we can use it in the Salt Lake congregation and my pastor leadership team. So I thank you so much. I, I think I say this in every podcast is like, whatever listeners, I don't care if you use this or not. This is changing my life. So thank you so much, and I appreciate you so much. Thanks, Carla.

Josh Mangelson 37:43

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