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

Joan Thompson 00:33

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Joan Thompson from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. This is the series climate brewing, where we interview the world class experts who have given presentations as part of the Community of Christ, North American Zoom series, All Of Creation: From Crises To Transformation. Today, we're speaking with Katie and Zac Harmon McLaughlin, who were part of the February 14 panel presentation on Engaging the Faith Community. The recording of that session, as well as a follow on conversation is available on our website, CofChristClimateJustice.org. Katie serves the Community of Christ in spiritual formation ministries. She's no stranger to Project Zion Podcast, having created a 10 episode series last spring on awakening to God's presence. Zac is the director of the Graceland seminary, and also a previous contributor to podcast. Of particular relevance for today's topic, is Episode 296. From last August Grounds For Peace series. It's such a pleasure to have the opportunity to explore with both of you how individuals and communities can become better engaged, and working towards climate justice. Climate Justice is such a massive and urgent problem with seemingly new information coming at us each week, around yet another dimension previously unrecognized, yet another change or shift to our lifestyles and economies that needs to be made, and ever more dire predictions of the future, even with massive global changes. Faced with this scope, and urgency, it seems like the natural response of most is to either become paralyzed by overwhelm and do nothing, or to jump in to join the first action that we become aware of, whether it's scientifically helpful one or not. So today, we want to explore an alternative approach that's especially suited to faith communities. But first, there's a statement that I've heard multiple times, that the climate crisis is actually a spiritual issue. Can you tell us more about this?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 03:53

Yes, thank you, Joan. I'll jump in. And then I'm sure Zac will have some thoughts as well. You know, the first response that I have is that everything in our lives is a spiritual issue. But in particular, when we think about the climate and justice for God's creation, we have to remember that we too, are part of that creation. We too, are part of the creation that God is creating and names good and beloved. And so recognizing our proper place within that interdependent web of life is part of our own humanity's spirituality theology. But also one of the stories that I shared for my own life during this presentation came from a time when I was in college, and I was you know, really learning about ecological theology and eco feminist spiritualities and feeling very passionate about climate justice and care for creation. And I was in the Student Center at Graceland University, holding a class plastic bottle. And I had a simple choice to make. There was right beside me a trash can. And across the student center was the recycle bin. And I was late to class. And there was a huge crowd of people coming through the doors, which would mean that I would be fighting against the crowd to get to the recycle bin. And in that moment, I had to make a choice of if I was going to choose the convenient, easy, quick option and get

to my class on time. Or, if I would choose the option that aligned more completely with what I was learning and discovering, and how I was being formed about God's care and love of this whole beautiful creation and my part in preserving honoring it and helping it to flourish. And so that moment, became a theological decision, it became a spiritual practice, it became a moment of profound spiritual awareness where I took this plastic bottle, and said to myself, I'm going to live my faith with integrity, even in this one small act. And so I walked through the crowd of people, I'm making this sound much more dramatic than it probably needs to be. But I walked through the crowd of people. And I ceremoniously held my plastic bottle over the recycle bin. And I dropped it in. And I just felt this sense of peace that comes from the alignment of our lives and hearts and actions with God's larger vision in the world and for the world. And so for me, that is just one example of how the daily choices that we make have profound spiritual and theological implications, even when we aren't conscious of those. But when we become conscious of those, we can contribute our actions meaningfully with God's preferred future in and for the world around us. And this topic of climate change certainly is a part of that invitation for spiritual and theological alignment and meaning in our lives.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 07:15

That was good. I'm not sure. I'm not sure I need to add anything that I guess the only thing I might say, would be another helpful way to look at this is, anytime we come across crisis or suffering, I think it's a helpful thing for us as disciples to locate God in it. Where is God in it. And what that immediately does is help us deconstruct a perspective that God is somehow separate from it. Somehow on the outside looking in, when in reality, God is fully present and existent within the crisis within the climate crisis. This is God's creation we have before the restoration movement even began, Christianity and Judaism have a rich history of finding God in creation, dwelling in creation, naming it Beloved, and giving life to it. And we find this in Genesis and in Exodus and in Isaiah and in John, and I could go on and on and on. But God shows up in creation, not separate from it. Now, I'm not saying God is creation, but I'm saying God is within and amongst creation. And that's a powerful paradigm shift to understand. God is not separate from the suffering of the world. And God is not separate from the climate crisis because this is and is part of God.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 08:49

I'll say one more thing to you. This is you know, for me one of my passions,

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 08:55

This is what happens when you have a couple do a podcast.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 08:59

Every time Zac says something, sparks something in me, um, no, one of my favorite quotes, and this is kind of a summation of ecological theology comes from one of the most renowned ecological theologians Sally McFague. The world is the body of God, which is a profound statement that reflects our theological belief in incarnation. And so when we understand creation, to be the body of God, then that profoundly impacts the way that we understand our actions toward that creation. And whether we are acting in a manner that is a desecration of the body of God or acting in a manner that is more sacramental and honoring of the body of God. That is the creation, the cosmos, of which we are privileged to be a part.

Joan Thompson 09:54

Wow, that kind of changes everything doesn't it? It shifts everything. Very much. When we started this series back, back last summer, rather than jumping right into the science and the facts, we started with the three-month journey, where we offered conversations around the sacredness of creation. And one of the ones that really has stuck with me all through this, in one of them, Laurie Gordon, who did a wonderful job of nurturing our spirituality towards creation, talked about the fact that human beings do not fight to protect what they don't cherish, that we must cherish something before we can have the motivation and stick-with-it-ness to actually go out and fight for it. So I'm wondering, I know this is putting you on the spot. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for how our listeners can start to really become cherishers of creation? Aside from and in conjunction with viewing all of creation as the body of God, that's a wonderful beginning. Is there anything else that you would recommend, as a simple, easy thing for people to start incorporating?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 11:45

I'll share and then you can jump in. We once did, Katie and I once did a climate, climate justice retreat for a congregation. And we did it with our great friend, mentor, Minister, extraordinary Dave Heinze.. And one of the exercises we did with the congregation that weekend has always stuck with me. And I find it a great way to begin to notice, again, getting back to our first response to notice our connection and our belonging to creation and really trying to start a different narrative of the us-them we have with creation, right? I'm not an animal, I'm not this, you know, and really, really starting the narrative of belonging, and connectedness. So what we did was we asked the congregation to look at their sacred space, we were sitting in the, in the congregational building, we begin to ask them to notice the elements around them. The brick that made the walls, where did that brick come from? What earth did it emerge from? Who mined it and dug it out of the ground, molded it and then burned it to, you know, make it brick? And the building had these huge wooden beams creating a massive, vaulted ceiling? Where did those beams come from? And what trees created those beams? And how did they get here, right, and you get the point, we literally just ask them to look around the room, they sat in, the room, they called beloved and sacred, where they were baptized and where they've been married, and their kids have been married. And they've had the sacramental experiences, all housed in creation. And noticing where it came from, and what it means and how we got it, I think is such a powerful and profound way to begin to notice things. And to simply, all of a sudden begin to realize we don't exist separately, and we can't exist separately. We need resources and creation to thrive and survive. And this is a mutual partnership of life. And it was a real moment for me to really, again, begin that process of connection and understanding my belonging to nature, not my Dominion of it, but my belonging to it. So I've always found that to be a helpful exercise to simply and you can do it in your house, you can do it while you're on a walk, to just start to notice the things that make up our life, where they come from, and what makes them so

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 14:35

Yeah, that was a that was a profound practice for me as well. And oh, my goodness, I have about 10,000 responses to this question. So I'll try to narrow it down and be succinct. One of the things that instantly comes up for me is Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel talks about the importance of living life and radical amazement at, as the heart of the spiritual life, and when we are able to look around us, as

Zac mentioned, just the everyday materials that make up our, our life and the things that we're able to do and where they come from, but even our own breath in being, and the foods that are on our table, and start to just awaken to and cherish our intrinsic connections with the planet, because they literally daily sustain us. I think that can give us a whole new level of appreciation, or creation, care and its importance, not as some abstract objects separate from us. But as an interdependent living organism integrally connected to us, that daily gives us the opportunity to breathe and eat and live, and move and have our being as the scripture reminds us. And so practices of gratitude, of holy attention, of gazing of noticing the birds and the trees and the seasons changing, and all of the ways that the patterns of creation, impact the patterns and cycles of our own lives, can be a wonderful way of deepening our sense of meaning and love and growing in our ability to cherish the natural world around us because we realize that it is part of us. And then, you know, on top of that, Oh, I can't remember what I was gonna say. Remember what I was gonna say. Wendy Farley, in her new book, *Beguiled By Beauty*, talks about falling in love with the beauty of the world, and how as we awaken to the beauty and the integrity of beings, a recognition that everything was created, not for me, as a consumer or spectator, but that it has its own life and purpose and being. I mean, when we really just dwell in that awareness, it is amazing and awe-inspiring and humbling. And dwelling in the beauty and integrity of other beings, whether human or non-human, naturally deepens our compassion and our urgency to care for the people in the planet that we love. And contributes to that sense of cherishing that can help us move to action.

Joan Thompson 17:42

Great ideas, I love Wendy Farley and her book. And all of her suggestions, including that beauty is not prettiness that there is beauty in everything in every stage. Yeah, and I agree it's such an important aspect. So, Zac, primarily, although Katie, I'm sure you'll have some good input too, once we've begun cherishing the creation, and we start to sense this passion to work for climate justice in some way, you've introduced us both through the February climate justice webinar, and also in last summer's Europe Peace Colloquy to the Pastoral Spiral model from Maria Cimperman's book, *Social Analysis For The 21st Century*. So for individuals and communities, who may be feeling overwhelmed about where to even start, and what they might possibly do to make even a small contribution to such a huge issue. What is it about this model that actually adds two more dimensions to the typical pattern of experience an issue and then go straight to responding to it? What is it about this that can cut through the overwhelm and confusion for us?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 19:33

Yeah, um, I could talk about the Pastoral Spiral for a long time. In fact, Joan has heard me talk about the Pastoral Spiral for a long time. But for the sake of a podcast, um, this is something that I've actually been introducing to groups as often as possible lately, because I like many people, my response to overwhelm is to Stop, right? I don't know where to go. And so I become hostage of the moment. And I just, I can't, you know, I can't do anything. And then, and then unfortunately, in my particular context, I end up falling into the complacency of privilege in which I find myself as a middle-class white, straight American male. So out of sight out of mind, it's not my problem. And I stop. The Pastoral Spiral does a couple things that are really profoundly important for us in times of overwhelm. One, it gives us focus, it reminds us that, hey, you don't have to solve the whole problem, because the whole problem isn't solvable. But you can act within your context to make significant and profound change. And so that's

really what the pastoral spiral does is it gives us an opportunity to become social change makers. In our context, we're not going to, you know, I should never say never right, because maybe who knows, but rarely will be the case that I as a disciple have some transformative impact on complex geopolitical issues in the world. But I can impact my house, my household, my congregation, my neighborhood, right, the places in which are my part of my context. And so the pastoral spiral helps us create focus. The other, perhaps more important thing it does, then help us clarify our why or our intention is the pastoral spiral helps challenge our norms, our biases and our assumptions. And so we no longer approach a certain problem or issue solely from our own lens. But we invite other voices into the conversation, other perspectives, other data points that reshape and reframe the very way in which we think. This is important, because when those things happen, we muster the courage to walk against the stream of culture across the room to a recycle bin, and put a plastic bottle away, because we're rethinking the way we understand ourselves in the world.

So the pastoral spiral has four main parts. You start with experience or encounter, you move into social analysis, which is understanding the broader context of your experience. That moves you into faith reflection, or the spiritual, spiritual reflection, theological reflection, discernment of that context and experience that moves you ultimately toward new questions, new actions, that ultimately leads you to new experiences, encounters, that will lead you to other analyses. So that's the third, I think, major, important part of the pastoral spiral, which is, we largely live in a world that is very linear. And most of the models and formulas we encounter are A plus B equals C. And so if you just do this, by the time you get to see, you will have resolved and solved the problem of climate in your context. That's not the case. This is a cycle. And so what cycles do is they don't take us linearly, they take us down into the depths, we continue to go farther and farther, deeper and deeper, I like to call these kinds of things. Luke 5 methods. In Luke 5 is the scripture where Jesus gets on the boat, tells them to stop casting in the shallows go into the deep water, they're hesitant; they do, they catch an abundance of fish. So this is a Luke 5 method of, you know, we've been trying it our own way for a long time. And Jesus is on the boat, disrupting us saying, hey, you're not quite getting it, try going deeper. And we're like, but Jesus, where we can figure this out without you. And it's time for us to let go of that hesitancy and try going deeper into a thing. And so the pastoral spiral presents a multitude of opportunities to do just that to not just assume that there is a quick fix, or whether like, sometimes I like to call them Amazon fixes. Overnight, you know, we'll solve the problem, and then it's done. But this is a cycle, a process of not only discovering small, focused, actionable items regarding your context and climate justice. But also as you move into those actions, you're having new questions emerge new encounters with new perspective or paradigm found through the process that ultimately lead you into a new process. And over time, that impact, that social change expands and we find new partners and we find new communities and we find a whole host of relationships that make a more robust, comprehensive approach to climate justice. The last thing I'll share is just a quick quote from Maria Cimperman. And I think it highlights getting back to our earlier conversation about connection and belonging to this in your, your comment earlier about really making climate a priority or something we cherish. So she she says this on page 175, in her book for those listeners that may have her book, she says, while we say we want these difficult problems and situations resolved, we usually mean that we want to have the problem solved without any significant changes on our part, or in our way of life. When you, and I love that, because it's so true for so many of us. Yeah, I want I don't want the climate to be suffering, I don't want, you know, environmental justice to be an issue. But I you know, it's also really easy to get the

plastic bag at the supermarket and you know, go home with it and just say three Hail Mary's later and mea culpa and you'll be good. But when you enter into the pastoral spiral, you cannot leave unchanged. That's part of the benefit of the spiral is that it's deconstructing our own assumptions, biases, and self-reinforcing narratives, as we move toward justice, which is ultimately a deeper, more profound sense of belonging and creation. I don't know if you have anything to add? I could I could go on and on, Joan, that's probably a good place to pause, I suppose.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 26:42

No, it was good. I'll just add on briefly that a couple things I really appreciate about the pastoral spiral is that I think it's a really wonderful integration of social change, and systems thinking with classic Christian discernment methodology. And so it really becomes this great way for contemplation to meet action for the benefit and the healing of the world. The faith reflection and social analysis pieces are taken equally seriously. And they affect and inform one another. But also, this is a method that is very accessible. You know, the way we talked about it might sound somewhat complex. But if you are a person or a community entering this process, I think that you'll find that it has a very natural flow. It's very accessible in terms of any issue that you are desiring to go deeper in, especially climate change. And it's relevant for many contexts. And this is a method that was developed, I believe, by the Jesuits, in the 80s. And it has been used around the world in some contexts of extreme poverty, as a way for communities to really be able to discern and delve deep into their contexts to find empowerment in their own ability to search their own circumstances to discover what is needed in a situation, and to respond in transformative and sustainable ways. And so this is really a process that has been used globally in many different kinds of contexts and socio economic circumstances, and has time and time again, been transformative for the lives of individuals and communities. And I think it is a really relevant and important helpful tool for us. As we look at climate change in our own unique contexts.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 28:51

I might add just one more thing. If that's okay. Because Katie said something I think is really important, and connects us to our very first question, which is so important for I think, all of us to understand that this is a spiritual theological issue. What the pastoral spiral does is it connects us to an interdisciplinary approach to a thing, which is really important to remember that you don't have to be a scientist to care about climate justice, right or, or to be knowledgeable about it. You don't just have to be a sociologist, or a theologian, or an educator or a healthcare professional, right, like the pastoral spiral takes an interdisciplinary approach at discovering the incredible interconnections and intersections of any given justice issue, to help us seek a holistic approach to action injustice, which is again just such an important part of its method and process.

Joan Thompson 30:01

Okay, that all sounds wonderful. And so I'm really getting a sense here of how important this kind of an approach is, especially for an issue, that we're in it for the long haul. That we need to make, not overnight, but we need to make significant change, and adaptation. So I want to go back for a minute to the overwhelm. And tell you a little about the story in my congregation. We started two years ago, we spent the winter and spring months learning and our adult discussion class about climate change and all of the issues. We did it through a video and discussion approach where we watched a whole bunch of different videos and talked about them. And then the intent was that that's all, we would then move

into action. Well, we didn't do that, because someone decided to start seminary and got totally sidetracked by reading and studying seminary textbooks, and also being involved in the North American Climate Justice Team. So long story short, it's two years later now, I haven't done anything except show up for a few protest marches. And in preparing for this podcast, I went back and listened again to your podcast number 296 - plug in there for the listeners. And it just sounded really incredibly helpful, where you talked about how Mother Teresa approach, doing small things with great love, was a great way for people to get started. And so I thought, okay, I can do one small thing with great love, I can send it an email to the congregation to see if anyone's interested in exploring climate action teams. Now commitment here, just you know, who's interested in talking about it for an hour a week. And so then eight of us are now meeting on a weekly basis. And all along, I've thought, Oh, I should contact this person and find out some information and this person and that person and the community, government and interfaith, and it just seemed overwhelming. But now that we've got eight of us, each person has agreed to do one thing - that's always starting with is just making one contact to get more information to take us to the next step. So is this what you're talking about, in terms of the way for congregations and other groups to slowly and easily naturally move into the process?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 33:27

Yes, Amen. 100 times over. Amen. Yes. Um, one, one thing that not so I do love Mother Teresa's approach of small things with great love. She changed the world with that approach. And one important thing to remember about Mother Teresa was that she focused on her context. She wasn't looking at the global world issue of children or child orphans or childhood poverty. She was focused on her context, on Calcutta, which is pretty powerful and profound. Another thing though, I think, in my context in the United States, something that has been highlighted by the last year's narrative of racial justice and the cultural shift and understanding and awareness of that that's been happening in the United States, has been an echoing flag of progress, not perfection. We, I shouldn't say we, I should say I, I fall under that category where I don't want, you know, I don't want people to see rough drafts of my stuff, right? I want to make sure it's fully ready to go and solid and I've read it 10 times and blah, blah, blah. But what I'm starting to learn about issues of justice, which the climate is an issue of justice, is that we don't have time for perfection. We have to stumble our way through it. Now that's not meant to be flippant and say, you know, don't take care or intention in what we do. But what that is to say is that we, we can no longer hesitate in order for 50,000 foot moonshots; we've got to look at this more as a Mount Everest situation. And you know how you get to the top of Mount Everest, you put one foot in front of the other, and you take a step, and then a step, and then a step. And it's a long walk. Right, that's how you get to the top of Mount Everest. And so if we really want to move on issues of justice, we do exactly what you are doing in your congregation. And it's baby steps with baby steps with a big idea. But baby steps nonetheless, that ultimately lead us towards social change in social transformation. So I think that's really important. And I think we as a community of Christ, as disciples, as Christians in the world, we need to stop hesitating for perfection, and begin moving toward the progress of the good news of Jesus Christ, which is justice.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 36:10

I'll also add in there real quick, as parents of a three year old, we call this the Ana from Frozen approach. And some people might be familiar with the song, The Next Right Thing. But that's a big part of this is moving one step at a time. And, you know, the pastoral spiral assumes a systems thinking

approach. Even if you don't understand systems thinking, as a listener, there is this intrinsic part of our discipleship that recognizes that we are dependent upon one another, that we live in an interdependent relationship with each other and with all of creation. And so part of the wisdom of taking the next right step or doing one small thing and then seeing what happens. And then another is that each small thing instantly changes the dynamics of that interrelatedness in the systems in which we are embedded and connected. And so then that changes what the next step after that might be. And that's a very different way of operating than saying, okay, our five year goal is that we will get to here, and this is the exact plan, we're going to do it and nothing better interrupt us or get in our way. Rather, that way of proceeding of taking one thing at a time, assume something that's true about the nature of reality, which is that it is disruptive, and dynamic and ambiguous and uncertain. And as we step closer to something, we see it more clearly. And that helps us discern and refine what the step after that might be. And that's why a process a cycle, a spiral approach is so helpful.

But I'll just say one more thing. To the overwhelm, which is that because this is a method, rooted in our faith, it also helps us to cultivate the very deep resources of people of faith, who are facing urgent and overwhelming issues such as these in a time such as this, that we are rooted not in our own immediacy or agenda. But our action is rooted and grounded in God, the source of life, the source of creation, source of love, source of perennial hope, that sustains us and gives us courage and integrity and faith, even in the midst of seemingly insurmountable odds. And so I think that's one really valuable resource that people of faith can bring to these perplexing issues that affect us as a global humanity is that activism without Spirit can quickly run dry, and drain us out and empty us out of our energy and motivation. But when we find our lives consistently tapping into that deeper source that motivates our actions, we can find the energy, courage and faith we need to engage over the long haul. Even if we don't see the immediate success we would desire.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 39:24

Yeah, and I will just add to that, since that's what that's what happens when we when you interview a couple in a podcast, even though it's always dangerous following Katie is she's much more brilliant than I. But she said something that I think is really important, which is something that I find really hard is to actually participate in what I believe. And what I mean by that is having trust that God shows up in it, that it's not just Zac's agenda, but it's not just Joan or Katie's ideas and agenda. But that we're actually prophetically participatory with God and God's liberated work of justice. And that's really hard because we live in a capitalist society that's consumer driven. And so we often get caught in strategy sessions and business models of how to create a product to be sold. When in reality, our job as disciples is to actually believe that God is in the work with us, that God is doing the leading, God is doing the inviting God is doing the healing, and that we are participants in that, and that is hard, that makes us actually have to be not just believers, but faithful believers. And that is hard for us. And I shouldn't say us, I should say me, that's hard for me because Zac's ideas are the best ideas, Zac's agendas, the best agenda, right, and I get so busy doing the work that I forget to notice the burning bush right in my front yard. And so I think Katie's point is, is really important.

Joan Thompson 41:08

I love I love that I really like Katie, your concept of the next right step. Because that just takes the whole lot of pressure off. If we only have to decide this week, the next step for this week, not worry about next

week or next month. And for both of you that concept, you know that it's God in the lead here, that also takes just a whole lot of pressure of having to figure it out and be right. That's all very, very helpful concept. So I'd like to ask you each, what do you most want listeners to take away from this session? Is there one practice or action or idea that you most want people to take away from this, to help them get started? If they haven't already got started in climate action?

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 42:20

Wanna start?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 42:22

You can start.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 42:24

Why don't you get started.

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 42:26

All right. Um, that's a great question. And I'm pausing just because there's a whole lot of things that I might want to say, I guess, an important takeaway from this conversation for me, is back to what we were just talking about, which is overwhelm. Friends, you do not have to solve the climate crisis on your own. In fact, it's not yours to solve on your own. But you can make a profound impact in just your family, or just your faith community, or just your neighborhood. And there are dozens of ways to do that. Even just making the shift from Styrofoam containers during a coffee hour or paper plates at a family dinner to regular dishes or compostable dishes. I mean, there, there are a whole host of small ways to begin that process of every day - I'm almost back to Katie's experience worship experiences - where we're proclaiming the good news that ultimately lead us to more and more experience. And this has been my, my experience and advocacy and justice work over the last decade or so. It is a slow process of building relationships with policymakers and legislators. And those things don't just happen, but it's a consistency of, of engaging in the work and showing up and being present. And so a takeaway from this would be just that, focus on your context, focus on the things that you can do, whether it's bringing a group of eight people together, and asking the questions collectively, or whether it is choosing to walk across the room and put a plastic bottle in a recycle bin. That is a profound victory of proclaiming God full present and creation.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 44:39

Yeah, and I'll just add to that, maybe a shameless promo that I would love if every listener went out and bought a copy of Maria Cimperman's book, *Social Analysis For The 21st Century*, and use that as a study in your congregation or in your own personal life. Because we have just given a very, very brief toe in the water description of the wisdom that is offered in this model that was not designed by Cimperman, but she does such a wonderful job of making it relevant within the contexts that we find ourselves in, in these kinds of issues in the world today. And she does specifically address climate change in her book. But, you know, I think maybe most of all, when I first felt a really deep call to ministry, and knew that I wanted to be a full-time minister, was when I discovered that discipleship was really exciting, that there was a real possibility of changing the world through our faith. And it's because every single day, our actions have an impact, whether we realize it or not, because we are embedded

in systems of relationship and connection with people and with the planet itself, by every decision we make, from what we choose to eat, the clothes that we buy, what we consume, how we live, where we drive, how we, how we commute, you know, all of those things impact the planet, and the people who are connected to the planet and the world around us. And so when we awaken to the power of our actions, and choose to embody our faith in daily decisions, it makes a difference in that system of connections, of which we are already in, always a part. And that's exciting to me that is really energizing and hopeful. Because it's not like I have to work really extra hard to make a difference in the world. I mean, that's debatable, guess, but every single day, I can make choices that can contribute to the flourishing and well-being of God's beloved, beautiful broken creation, too, and to know that I'm part of that creation. And so I guess I want people to hear that. There's joy in this effort. There's hope in this effort. Even though the problems are tragic and overwhelming. The invitation is joyful resistance for the sake of God's peaceable Kingdom Come near, and the well-being of God's full creation. And to me that is powerful, profound, exciting, energizing, radically amazing work that I feel privileged to participate in. And so my prayer and hope is that others might awaken to that joyful invitation to participate with God in bringing about a better world for everyone.

Joan Thompson 47:58

Wow, well, all I can say to that is Amen. That was beautiful. Thank you, Katie and Zac. My last question was going to be what gives you hope. But Katie, I think you've already covered that. So I let this anything either of you wants to add at this point?

Zac Harmon-McLaughlin 48:23

Well, I think I might just add one, since Katie added a shameless plug, I might also just say this. We teach this stuff in the Community of Christ seminary. We teach from this book in the Community of Christ seminary. And if you are listening to this podcast, and you're resonating with this process, or this kind of language and narrative, this is what we do in a theological education setting. This is what we do in the seminary. It is about practical application and social change. That's why seminaries exist. And so if you're resonating with it, don't hesitate to go to www.graceland.edu/seminary, and check out some of the things we do. And I know that is profoundly shameless plug but I'm also dead serious about it. I am not the kind of person to just do a job for a job. I'm passionate about what I do. And there's a reason we teach this kind of methodology and this kind of thinking, to lead us toward a more just a more peaceful world in which we can daily encounter God's movement and Reign.

Katie Harmon-McLaughlin 49:38

And I have one more hopeful thing to add - this is gonna be like a three hour podcast. Um, one thing that gives me tremendous hope is this committed group of disciples in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and throughout Canada, who have decided to put together this climate colloquy series. Because it felt like such an urgent, passionate issue, to awaken us as a church to the necessity of action in this area. And so Joan, I'm really, really grateful for your work and for the work of the Team, and for your willingness to put this issue before the church in such an intentional and meaningful way, that gives me hope to. Amen.

Joan Thompson 50:23

Thank you, Katie. And I need to say that it's so easy and our faith community to do this kind of stuff. We did not get official permission to form this committee. We formed this committee and talked about what we wanted to do and decided we were going to do a colloquy and then we informed the First Presidency. And brother Veazey, said, appreciate you keeping me informed. And so long as we tell them what we're doing, so they can put the brakes on if they see an area of concern. It's, it's just so freeing and empowering to be part of that kind of community that says, or you got an idea, go with it. So I appreciate all that. And, Zac, I have to tell you that I said many times, when my husband was in seminary, that one thing I knew for sure was that I would never take a seminary degree. I had zero interest in ever doing the seminary journey, but it has been delightful, time consuming in some cases. But it's been a wonderful journey. So thank you for your plug. That's fine. So I think we'll call it a day. So thank you so much, both Katie and Zac, for sharing generously of your time with us today and in your daily lives. Thank you to our listeners for joining us, as well as we continue to wrestle with the current and forecasted climate crisis, and what our role and response should be. Join us next month, when Dr. Phoebe Barnard will be discussing biodiversity loss, and the Fraying Tapestry of Life. Thank you.

Josh Mangelson 52:54

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