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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 00:33
Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long. And I am super duper duper excited to welcome our guest today, on our series Steamers and Sodas. This series is all about kids and how we work with kids in Community of Christ and hopefully everyone can come on here and learn something about how to work with kids, because that's a super, super ministry, important ministry that we offer. So my guest today is Joelle Wight who is my colleague, and my dear friend, and I am just fangirling all over the place because she is so, so good at what she does, and super, super good at working with kids. Hi, Joelle.

Joelle Wight 01:12
Hi. I feel like maybe 50% of our work time is just like fangirling over each other, like back and forth.

Carla Long 01:19
Isn't that disgusting? Everyone on here should know how much we like working together because it's just the truth. So, Joelle, can you tell us a little bit more about yourself?

Joelle Wight 01:31
Yeah. So before I do that, though, let me just say I love that this series exists. I didn't know that it did. But I think it's so important that there's such a specific focus on kids. So good on you. That's awesome. There I go fangirling. Sorry. So my name is Joelle and I work for Community of Christ in Utah with the Latter-day Seeker team out there. Before I started working with Community of Christ, I taught fourth grade. And I also got an education to be a social worker as well. So I kind of have different levels and layers of working with kids throughout my background. But right now, I'm kind of living that out in my ministry.

Carla Long 02:09
You know, I've always thought that having a background in teaching is the perfect background to becoming a minister. I mean, you have to, when you're teaching, you have to think on your feet, when you're a minister, you got to think on your feet. You got to be good in front of people with both of those professions. You have to, like, plan things out with both of those professions. You have to be entertaining, because I think being a teacher more so than ever is just being entertaining. If the kids aren't paying attention, they're not going to learn. So, I think it's a awesome background to becoming a minister. I could be wrong about that, but let's be honest, I'm not. (I agree. I agree.) So Joelle, why don't

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you give us all, of course, your Kids Camp this year in 20, in 2020, was completely online, of course. So could you give us an overview of the camp, just, you know, you can talk about when you had it, or how you got started. Anything. Just tell us a little bit overview.

Joelle Wight 03:04
Yeah. So you know, we found out just a few weeks before in-person camp would have been that we were going to have to move online. And, so, it was kind of like a scramble to pull together a meaningful experience for the kids. And, and so what resulted didn't look at all like the format of a normal camp. You know, we, we didn't just keep it to one week in the summer, a couple days in the summer. And it wasn't the normal time period and things like that. But really, because we weren't married to anything we'd done in the past, because we were doing something so new, we kind of got to format it in the way that works best in the situation. And so rather than, you know, condensing it into just a short amount of time, we decided to spread our meetings out throughout the summer, so that we could kind of touch base with the kids the whole time throughout those months when they wouldn't be in school. And so we had five, maybe six different sessions on Fridays throughout the summer, that lasted about 30 minutes each. And they were once a week on, you know, at the end of the week, in the afternoon. And we had an overall theme for the summer. And the theme was just kind of peace. It was #Peace. And then each of the different lessons focused on a different aspect of peace. So the first week was peace for me. Then we moved to peace for us, peace for everyone, peace for the planet, and then we ended with peace for tomorrow.

Carla Long 04:21
So, I think it's really interesting that it was only 30 minutes long. I say only, but I've taught a class on, online and it is hard to fill up 30 minutes sometimes. Did you, did you think that was the right amount of time, the 30 minutes?

Joelle Wight 04:39
It's actually interesting that you asked that because I don't think that there was a single week when we actually were able to keep it to 30 minutes. I went in very much thinking you know, we had super young kids. We had kids as young as kindergarten and actually even younger than kindergarten. And I didn't think that more than 30 minutes we would be able to keep their attention. But I think every week we went at least 45 minutes. So, in the future, I would probably plan for a little longer just because of the different elements that we had incorporated in that time. But I had the same concern as you. I was like, how are we going to fill 30 minutes online with these kids? How are we going to keep their attention that long?

Carla Long 05:14
Yeah, cuz it is not easy. And I mean, you had little kids; some little ones. Speaking of the littlest of the littles, there's also the concern about Registered Youth Workers and so I know we have to be really,

really careful with our kids. And so you definitely were great at following some of the rules. And some people might be interested, what are those rules? What are the rules for online youth classes.

Joelle Wight 05:42
It seems that those rules are still in process. And we're, we're still trying to, to figure out exactly what best practice is. But we were able to get some guidance from the American Camping Association on what that should look like to keep kids safe. And I also had the opportunity to be in conversation with, with other people in Community of Christ, who were doing online format camps. And so we were really able to establish some good guidelines, I think, to help keep the kids safe. So first of all, we made sure that, you know, even if we weren't going to be in the same physical space as kids, we had at least two adults on that we're youth worker certified, meaning they've been through the, the training and the class, and they've had the interview, and they've had the background check to make sure that they were good to work with our kiddos. And we actually, rather than just having two had a third person on. That way, if anybody's Internet cut out, the chances were that we wouldn't lose two of the adults that of the three that were on there. And so we'd always have two youth worker certified adults. In addition to that, we did not record any of our meetings, because even if we have a safe place to store those meetings, we can't 100% guarantee that they're you know, protected forever. And we didn't want any video with a, with a child's face on it getting, you know, out into the, to the interwebs, if you will. So we made sure to never record. We also required that the kids had their camera on the entire time. And that can be kind of frustrating, because there are definitely days when I don't want my face on camera. But it was really about making sure that we could see what was going on in the background and that we knew who was in the room, and who was, you know, in the camp experience with us. So that was a requirement and an expectation when the kids came in. We did tell the parents about that, you know, weeks in advance when we send out the information packets. Another thing that we let parents know is that they needed to be, not necessarily in the same room as their kid, but they needed to be able to hear and, you know, pop their head in if anything were to happen. We didn't want parents, you know, leaving the kids in, in our care exclusively just in case something happened and they needed medical help or something like that. So we made sure that parents knew that they needed to be around in order for their kid to join. Um, I'm trying to think of what other safety things we put into place.

Carla Long 07:46
Wasn't there something about bathroom breaks or something like that?

Joelle Wight 07:49
Yeah, so that kind of goes into, like, our expectations for how we were going to be together in virtual community, which was something that we put a lot of time into developing before camp even started. We kind of just thought of, you know, all of the issues that could come up, and then we tried to preempt them. So, you know, kids were, were more free than they would have been in a typical camp setting because they're in their homes, and we don't, you know, necessarily have the same safety concerns about them wandering off. But when they did have to take a bathroom break, they had a little symbol that they

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did with their fingers to let us know. And then, you know, we just kind of acknowledged that we, we knew they were leaving. But they always, always, always had to leave their camera put, they could not take it with them wherever they went, because we didn't want any mistakes. And any you know, anybody not realizing they were on camera and doing something that other people could see that they maybe wouldn't want seen. So that was just something we talked through with the kids. And they all did a really good job of it. You know, when they needed a drink, they'd show us the, the water sign. And when they needed to go to the bathroom, they'd show us the bathroom sign and the cameras stayed where they needed to stay. So it worked out well.

Carla Long 08:48
That's, that's very clever. That's very clever. So, can you talk a little bit more about those expectations that you discussed? Or do you remember any of the other of those? I, we're doing this quite a bit after camps. Joelle's having to remember back quite a few months.

Joelle Wight 09:07
Yeah, I do actually have some of those. Um, give me just a second and I'll make sure I'm telling you. So we had expectations about muting and unmuting. And when you were, you know, allowed to unmute, and when you needed to keep yourself muted. We kind of just phrased that in, in the terms of, like, there's a lot of background noise in your house, like dogs barking and siblings crying. And it was just important to have a seamless listening experience. And so we taught the kids where the mute button was and where the, like how to unmute themselves. But we also made sure that we still raised our hands and things like that. We put into place early on what to do if you had technology issues, because obviously if somebody's struggling with their computer, I can't physically be there to help them fix it. And so, you know, we went through if you're having trouble and you can't get your camera on, so I can't see you raising your hands, you say your name once while you're unmuted or you say my name once while you're unmuted. And then I know that you need help, rather than saying, my computer's not working, my computer's not working, my computer's not working. So we had, you know, plans in place for technology issues. We taught the kids early on how to use the chat. And we talked about how it could be, you know, a way for us to enhance the conversation and to affirm what other people were saying without interrupting them. But that we also needed to make sure that the chat didn't distract from what the, the conversation at hand was. We, you know, did just like basic stuff you do in a normal space, like anytime you're working with kids talking about taking turns and minimizing disturbances and, and working on projects. And then as you already mentioned, we did the bathroom and drink breaks, and we had a pretty good plan for that as well.

Carla Long 10:41
So you guys put a lot of thought into this before. That's, you know, every time I know a camp experience goes pretty seamlessly, I know that the director and I know that everybody in charge has done a ton of work, because it is a lot of work to put on a children's class, whether it's in person or online. So I think all of those sound really cool. Um, let me think if there's any more questions I had

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before, oh, did you talk to parents beforehand? Like I think you mentioned that you did. Did you like send something out to parents before, so they knew what to expect, so, what they should expect?

Joelle Wight 11:18
At the very beginning, you know, when we were just getting planning in place, we wanted to make sure that we involved the parents a lot, because this was going to be such a different format. And rather than being able to drop their kid off for a couple days, they were going to have to be more actively engaged in the whole process. So I began by sending out a survey to parents. I just kind of got feedback from them on, if they wanted to have it all scrunched into a week or if they wanted to have it spread out over the summer; kind of the times of day, that would be good; you know, what supplies they might not have at home. I kind of had like a checklist, and they could check supplies that, that they would need us to provide. So once that survey came back in, then we went through the whole planning process. And then after the planning process was kind of complete, I compiled like a virtual camp document that had all of the information the parents could need. So it started out with just a welcome letter kind of explaining what camp was going to be like. Then it had our daily camp schedule and that included like the date and time of the meeting and any supplies that they would need from home as well as any supplies that they should expect to have mailed for me. And then there was a Zoom link that they could actually click on in the document. Didn't work super well. It was kind of slow to load, but it was still there. We ended up sending those out by email each week, though, because it was a little slow technologically. Then we had the daily schedule in terms of, like, each of the activities that would be taking place throughout the meeting. And then we had a supply list. And it was really important that we not only said, you know, these are supplies that you'll need to have at home, like crayons and scissors and things like that. But we also included the supplies they should expect to have mailed to them. Even though we didn't have anything like sharp, like scissors or anything like that, I still just didn't want, you know, any dangerous pieces. Like if we had a small piece and there was a younger sibling that got a hold of it, because the parents didn't know that it came in the packet. I just didn't want that. So we, we let them know all of the supplies that we would be sending them as well. And we told them what they were going to be used for so they could kind of anticipate what the activity was going to be and see how involved they were going to need to be with their kid on that activity. We also kind of told them, we didn't get into too many specifics, because we wanted the kids to be surprised. But if we were going to be using YouTube videos, we'd give them a heads up about that. As well as books and other miscellaneous things. And then the camper safety information as well as the expectations that we've already discussed were included in that packet as well.

Carla Long 13:41
That is really awesome. I'm super, super impressed. I imagine the parents were pretty impressed too. So I really want to talk about activities you did. I know you did a ton of cool activities. But before I do that, do you have like any tips or tricks to, like, keep kids attention? Can you give us any ideas on how to do that?

Joelle Wight 14:06

Yeah, it's tricky. And I'll actually say that I think it's a little bit easier online than I anticipated it being. I think when you're in person, first of all, everybody loses their attention at some point. Like, that's just who human beings are. Things distract us. That's the way our minds work. And so, you know, always when I'm working with kids, I want to provide, like, productive ways that that can happen or like safe ways that that can happen. But when you're all together in the exact same space, it's very easy for one kid losing attention to then cause every kid to lose attention. But when you're on the computer, because kids stay muted when they're not speaking, and because they're in their own physical space, I feel like it's easier for them to kind of take those little brain breaks where they need to not have focus without disrupting the other kids. So, I'll just say that to kind of begin. Like, it was easier to keep the whole group focused in an online setting than it would be in an in-person setting. We kind of moved quickly through activities. And so there wasn't a lot of time for kids to get bored or to lose interest. So I think that that helped. We also had, like, little sayings to get attention back. You know, things that we put in place at the beginning. So one thing that I do a lot with kids is called boom, snap, clap. And it's just, you know, a simple thing that we do with our hands where we clap and snap and, you know, hit different parts of our body and it makes this really cool rhythm. And so when I need kids' attention, I don't even say anything. I just start doing boom, snap, clap. And then like it builds, and eventually, the whole group is doing it. And they really like it because they get to be a part of something that sounds cool, but it also gets everybody focused on me so that we can move on. So, yeah, it's just like little, little attention getters like that are great ways to get people back on track. And then I think that if I notice that a kid is kind of, like, starting to get distracted or isn't really paying attention, I don't call them out. But I want to make sure that I, I let them know that I still care about them participating. And so, you know, I might ask them like an easy question that even if they weren't listening to the story, they'll be able to answer just to know that they're still on my radar and they're still important to me and I still want their input, so that they feel like they have a stake in the conversation that we're having.

Carla Long 16:21

I have to say, Joelle that I really love how you described all of that because it's so easy to get negative when people aren't listening to you. And I remember, you know, I only taught for three years. But I remember, like, seeing these teachers who have taught for, like, 30 years and, like, the second the kids would be distracted, like, they would get yelled at, like, so quickly. And it was just such a negative place. So, I love how you talked about taking brain breaks because everybody needs to take a brain break. I think that that is very kind and I love how you can bring them back by asking them an easy question and letting them feel that, Hey, I know this stuff. I can be a part of this. So I could like see how uplifting that would be rather than, Hey, you! Start listening again! Which is very easy to do. But it's not, it doesn't develop that positive atmosphere. So, what a cool way to do that. I appreciate that a lot. So I'm really excited to hear about some of the activities that you did. I know that you all worked really hard on these activities and I know that you have such great ideas. So, you know, I don't know if you want to tell us about just a few of your favorites, or tell us just some ideas. Because I know there's also cool things that you can do on the computer. The kids can be doing it with each other. So it does feel

like more of a community activity rather than everyone just doing their own little thing. So, anyway, I would just love to hear about some more activities.

Joelle Wight 17:50
Yeah, so for the schedule of our camp each day, it had the same feel so kids knew coming in the different sections to expect. And so we began each meeting with a video playing. And it was just one that I created with like a program that came with my computer. So, even if you're not super tech savvy, it's something that, that a lot of computers just walk you through. And that way, as kids were coming in, we were still able to, you know, give them a little shout out in the chat and tell them that we were glad that they were here. But they were also still kind of able to get their head in the space to be in camp. And if they'd forgotten to get any of their supplies while the video was playing, they had time. And so it just had like a fun, upbeat song. And then it would just pop up with reminders and then say things like, We're glad you're here. And then the next screen would be like, Do you have all your supplies with you for today? We're glad you're here. And it would just it would just go through that as kids were logging on, which also kind of gave like, we started that a little bit before actual meeting time, but it went into our meeting time, so it gave a little flexibility. If parents were showing up early or late, it was okay. Their kids still had something to do on the screen. And then from there, the entire staff of our Kids Camp, with one exception, there were three of us, so two of us had never, had never done Kids Camp with these kids before. And one of the people that was on staff had and he'd done it for a few years, I think. But these kids didn't know our faces. We were, you know, getting kids signed up that hadn't necessarily come to in-person Kids Camp before and, and so we knew that they knew some other adults' faces, but they didn't necessarily know ours. So after that little reminder video played, then we had just a video that we'd asked people to record and send in of them just welcoming kids to camp. So each day it would be a different person, One day Carla did one, you did one. One day Brittany Mangelson did one. We had Robin Linkhart do one. And so they were just able to share their love with the kids and let them know that even though they couldn't see them in person, they were still really glad that they were having this opportunity to get together in camp and talk about peace. And we also had them talk about why peace was important to them, which I think helps the kids realize that it was an important topic. Well, and then after that welcome video played, we went straight into a video of a campfire song. So the kids could either just sit and listen or they could sing along, but we had somebody record a different song for each meeting. And that way the kids got a little bit of that campfire feel too, which is a little bit tricky to do when you're on Zoom because you can't sing all together. So, after the welcome thing played, we then went into a community building activity, which is really important because again, a lot of these kids didn't know us, and they didn't necessarily know each other. And so we wanted ways for them to be able to play and interact together. So, for community building, we did a variety of things. And you were kind of mentioning, some of them where they could, like, be interacting on the computer. So, with that, we used some of the Zoom tools. And it worked pretty well honestly. It's not at all how the Zoom tool is supposed to be used. But we had collaborative I spy, so I put an I spy up on the screen, and I would share my screen. And then, you know, this took a while we had to teach the kids how to do it. But we taught them how to annotate using Zoom. And so they could all pick the different color that they want it

to be. And then they go through the I spy and they'd circle the things that they found. Now, there's a small caveat on certain computers, the annotate doesn't work. And so for those kids, we let them unmute and they were able to call out to other people so that those people could circle for them. So, I think with a lot of this stuff, you just kind of have to get creative in how you respond because we had no clue at all wasn't going to work on some computers until the day of. So, yeah, we had collaborative I spy was a good community building game. We also did charades, where the you know, the kids I sent out little, in their packs, I sent out little topics, and they would draw one and they would act it out. We did a scavenger hunt sort of where they went and found one object that really described them well, and they came back and they shared and that was day one. And I think that that was really cool because kids felt like they got to take something from their home and from their safe space and they got to share it with these new friends in a way that told about them. After we did the community building activity, we moved into our lesson for the day. And so again, that would focus on peace, for me, peace for us peace for everybody, peace for the planet, or peace for tomorrow. Typically, that was just us reading a book or, you know, watching a movie clip. It's really important, though, that if you use those things online, you make sure to get copyright permission before you do so. And I'll share kind of at the end a place where you can get some more information about how to do copyright stuff. But, yeah, we would just talk about, you know, peace in relation to those different things. So, my favorite day was probably peace for the planet. And we read a book called Wangari's Peace Trees or Trees of Peace. And it was all, it was a true story all about this woman who had planted trees because she saw that there was a lack in her country and in her community. And as a result, it kind of created this ripple effect. And so we talked about her as a superhero for peace. And then after the lesson was done, we move into an activity which was usually a craft. Sometimes it would be, you know, something where the kids were moving around a bit more, but we had them create peace shields or do an activity where they, they found out how hard it is to, to draw from a different perspective than their own. One day we had them make like an independent weaving. So I sent out paper plates with yarn and they were able to kind of weave their little creation. And then on the day when we did the the Trees of Peace story, and we talked about how Wangari was a superhero of peace, the kids then got to decide what their piece superpower would be. And they got to create a superhero that reflected that superpower. And seeing what the kids came up with was really, really cool. It was awesome to see. And then we would close each meeting with a spiritual practice. And sometimes, spiritual practices, especially with kids, are hard to do online. It's a lot easier to do those when you're in person. And you can kind of, you know, feel the tension in the room or, or feel where the energy level is, and respond accordingly. But it actually worked out really well. One day, we did draw prayer, and the kids came up with the coolest prayers. And after they drew their prayer, they got to share about it. And so it's just really neat to see that in community. We also did like a, a five senses grounding, uh, spiritual practice, and a meta prayer. And actually, if you're interested in finding more spiritual practices for kids, we have a website called allthingsarespiritual.org. And it is, you know, has a lot of resources, including tons and tons of spiritual practices that you can use with young people. Some of these activities required more prep work than others. Some of them we had to create things to send out in the packets to go home. And so if you're planning on doing these, it's just really good to give yourself at least a couple of weeks, because with mailing time, you know, it could

take at least a week to get there. So depending on what activities you plan to do, it's good to get those done ahead of time.

Carla Long 24:44
That sounds so, so, so, so, so cool. Um, you mentioned the allthingsarespiritual.org website, which is an awesome website. The spiritual practices for children is super cool. But where else did you get ideas? Did you just pluck them out of your head? Or, or did they come from your teaching experience? Or did you find some things online?

Joelle Wight 25:07
I will say this, as a teacher, you learn to get really good at borrowing ideas, and also sharing ideas. And so, yeah, some of them were plucked out of my head, but any of them that were plucked out of my head had already been planted there through other experiences. So one thing that I do is anytime I see an activity that I, you know, think might work really well, or that I don't have a specific place to use, but I just really like, I keep it in a Word document. And that way when things like this happen, and, you know, there's just so little time to plan, then I have that resource that I can go back and look at. However, in addition to that, you know, that doesn't have all of the ideas I need. I also use things like Pinterest. But if you're using Pinterest, it's a good idea to, you know, really look into the activities and see kind of the theology behind them and make sure that it aligns with the identity, mission, message and beliefs of the group you're working with. So in my case, Community of Christ. There are also other, like, really fun kid websites that, that just have, you know, good thought provoking things like Wonderopolis where kids can ask questions and get responses. And a lot of those are science based, which didn't necessarily work for the activities that we were doing. But some of them do lead to really important conversations. So like, the question could be what is empathy, and it might take a scientific look at it, but then it kind of brings it full circle and, and allows for a really important conversation. Let's see, there's also a lot of resources on the Community of Christ website. So, for example, if you search any of the Enduring Principles in Community of Christ, so for example, Pursue Peace, in the website search bar, you'll get a whole list of things that pop up and on that list there will be ideas for youth, ideas for young people, and ideas for children. And if you click on any of those, there will be at least two and sometimes three, just quick little activities that, you know, allow for conversation and allow for exploration, and are pretty, typically pretty easy to do. So that's a good place to look for ideas. And then another thing on the Community of Christ website is under the worship helps, there's the Sacred Space resource. And within that resource, there's something called Thoughts for Children. And those, again, are just like really quick lessons that you can do with young people that typically have good opportunity for conversation as well. Affiliated with the church, there's the Peace Pavilion curriculum, which is kind of where the idea of peace for me, peace for us, peace for everyone, peace for the planet came from. And so if you look online, I believe they have a website that I think I consulted before we did this activity, but they have a lot of ideas there as well. And then I mentioned at the beginning that the American Camping Association kind of provided some of the guidance for us on keeping kids safe. They also did webinars when they realized that, you know, people were going to have to move their camping

experiences online, they started hosting free webinars. And so I attended a couple of those. The first was about safety, which is the one I mentioned. But then there was one where people just talked about how they were planning on taking their activity online. And so you could see, you know, already tried and trued, true examples of what people were doing. So like, some of these camps weren't just summer camps and they'd already been online for months at the time that we were hearing from them. And so if you go to the American Camping Association, a lot of those webinars are recorded, and they still have the ideas. And then finally, another good place that I got ideas was just collaborating with other people in other areas. So they weren't necessarily working with me on the Utah Kids Camp. But they were working on a kid's camp in Colorado, or one on the east coast. And so we were able to share ideas and meetings with, with other people who were kind of in the same boat of trying to provide meaningful experiences in a completely new format and kind of at the last minute, those meetings just kind of organically popped up and we began to share ideas. And so in that spirit, I want to offer up my email address if there, you know, is anything that I've mentioned today that you're interested in knowing more about, or if you just want to bounce ideas around, you can email me at jowight@cofchrist.org. That's jowight@cofchrist.org.

Carla Long 29:11
Whoa, I had no idea. And just one more time, what was the name that science website one drop a list or something? (Wonderopolis.) Oh, Wonderopolis which actually could work Wonderopolis. Okay, that's really helpful. And I love that Community of Christ offers all of those different ideas for like getting Enduring Principles and things like that. That's very cool. It's, I think that cofchrist.org offers a lot more than what people actually think it does. It's more than just worship helps people. It's more than just worship helps. It's true. There's a lot on there. Your activities sound so much fun and, and I think it's super awesome that you incorporated so many different parts of a, someone's brain, you know, like with the, with the craft and the activity, with the watching videos, with the singing, with the community building exercises. It's very cool. Before I forget to ask, you mentioned something about copyrights, and you would talk a little bit about that near the end. So can you talk about that now?

Joelle Wight 30:20
Yeah, so actually the best place that I can think of to point people, at least as a starting point for copyright information is on the All Things are Spiritual Website. Karin Peter and Joanne Fisher have been doing a really, really cool activity that's a kid's online book club. And because of that, they've had to do a lot of the copyright work. And so within that website, if you go to the section that's under, it's like, under spirituality for kids, and then specifically, it's about the kids book club, there's kind of an overview about how to start your own book club. And within that overview, there's just some basic, like, bullet points of what you need to do, who you need to contact and where to get started to find that contact information. So it's not necessarily all encompassing and everything that you might need to know but it's a really good place to start. And they have both already been doing it. And so if you have questions for them, you can also find their email within that resource and just kind of ask them about the copyright stuff, too.

Carla Long 31:15

That's really helpful, because it's really, really easy to forget about that copyright stuff, when you're like, Oh, it's just a couple of us. Well, it's still super important to do. So you've talked a lot about the activities that did work. Was there any activities that did not work at all, that just like fell completely flat, and you're, like, That was a terrible idea.

Joelle Wight 31:37

So, I'll say this before I share specifics. I think that even the things that didn't go super well provided really great opportunities for conversations with the kids. And those conversations instilled resiliency and flexibility. So, for example, when we did the paper plate weaving, that is something that, like, in person, kids would have love it because I could have helped them, you know, get it started. And then from there, it's just a pattern and a rhythm, and it would have gotten great. But getting it started on their own was just so hard. And you know, we, we sent them the plates without anything on them because we wanted them to be able to pick the colors they were going to use and all this stuff, but they had to tie a knot. And they had to tie it really close to the center. And then they had to start weaving from there. And it was just a lot. And so, you know, from, from the beginning of that activity, I could just tell that they were getting stressed. And so it really allowed us the opportunity to kind of pause and say, You know, we're on peace for everybody today. But are there things that we learned from the peace for me that can help us in this moment to kind of remain calm and try our best and be patient and wait, you know, until somebody can help us. And so it was not, it did not go super well online, but I think that ultimately, it led to a really good conversation. But in the interest of full disclosure, camp was a long way from smooth sailing. We had some technology issues. Like one day, I went to go play the video, and my computer was working just fine. And then the, the screen that I had the video on went completely gray, and then I couldn't see anybody at all. And so in that case, it really helped to have another adult on the call who is able to pull the video up and play it from his machine. So again, just being flexible in the moment and responding to the challenges as they come up. And then like I mentioned earlier, when we were trying to do the annotation feature with the kids that they could circle, you know, the the part on the I spy that they wanted to find, it wasn't working for all the kids. And so again, we just had to come up with a solution right there on the spot. Now, I will say this. After we taught the annotation feature, there were, there was a certain kid who just really liked it and wanted to keep drawing on the screen. And so even though we'd set the expectation that there was a certain time to annotate, that expectation wasn't really being followed. So it's also just good beforehand, if you explore the technology so that you know that there's a way to turn annotation off when you're done using it. So, you know, that created a little bit of a hiccup, but as soon as we were able to turn the annotation off, it wasn't a big deal. And then another thing that was a little bit tricky was setting those expectations. This is maybe like a point of personal preference for me. But I think that we can't really get mad at kids when, you know, they behave a certain way if we haven't set an expectation for a different way of doing things. And so, to me, the most important thing that you do when you work with a group of kids at the very beginning, is you have conversations about what you want the community to be like and how you want things to flow. And

those conversations aren't, you know, one sided conversations. It's a conversation between you and the kids so they get to provide input, too. But that was really tricky in the amount of time we had and, you know, we'd have kids that were there one week and not there the next week. And so we'd have to go through the whole list of expectations again. When do you unmute? When do you mute yourself? How do you go to the bathroom? All that kind of stuff. And so setting the expectations wasn't as smooth as it would have been in person and it was kind of hard to get that same community feel and so that was another thing to kind of be prepared for. But I will say that even with all of these issues, the kids were so flexible and they weren't getting upset about it and they were just kind of willing to go with the flow and roll with the punches. And so even when things didn't go right it was still totally worth it and it was still a really good experience

Carla Long 35:23
That's awesome. I mean all of the stuff that you are talking about that didn't work so well, it sounded like you found a way to make it work and I think that that speaks highly to how you are as a teacher as well as how good your staff was as well. So I'm just super impressed by how things went. I think it's, i'm really impressed. Um, let's see. Is there anything else that I didn't ask that I needed to ask? Was there something else you wanted to say that I've forgotten?

Joelle Wight 35:52
Well, we talked a little bit about, like, these specific activities that went really well, but there are a couple other things that I wanted to mention from a logistical perspective that I think are things that I would do again. So the first thing is taking time to teach the kids how to navigate Zoom. At this point, a lot of them have been in a school year where they've had to use Zoom and so they're probably a little bit better at it at this point. But I think it was really valuable to help them identify, you know, what each button did and how they could, you know, do different things on their screen so it took a little time, but i think it was worth it. Another thing that we did is we scripted out each lesson and it wasn't like a script that, you know, couldn't veer from it and you couldn't say anything different, but it was good to have those lessons scripted out because if the person who is leading a section lost their Internet, then the next person could hop right in and know exactly where they were and we could kind of flawlessly continue the lesson. Another thing we did was we sent a snack along in the packet which was something that was kind of simple and you know a lot of the kids had snacks at home, but it was something that made it special. They knew that when it was time to come to camp for the day, they could go to their pack and they could pick out which snack they wanted. And so they really enjoyed, you know, picking from a variety of snacks that was in the pack. Now, if you're going to do that, it's really important on your registration to make sure that you've checked for allergies so that you're not sending things that, that might make some of the kids sick. And then on the subject of sent material, it really helps to have things excessively organized and, you know, that, that took a lot of prep beforehand, but I think it was so worth it in the end because every week the kids would come and they'd have exactly what they needed and so we would stack things by day in the packets that we sent and then we'd paperclip a little circle on the top and it was just a little paper label and it said, Here are the things you're going to need for this date. So it

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would say which date you were planning for and which date was in that little pack. And they would also tell you what you needed from home and so it was just another way to reinforce that list that we've already sent out. And then finally, I think it worked really well to have that video playing, as I mentioned, as the kids arrived just because it provided a lot of time for relaxation before we actually got started and it provided a lot of flexibility for participants

Carla Long 38:01
Oh, Joelle, you put in so much work. You put in so much work. I bet those packs were perfect. Well, thank you so much for being willing to talk about what you did. I, I hope, hope, hope that in 2021 we won't be having online camps, but if we are, then this, I'm sure this podcast has helped a lot of people out and perhaps started getting them thinking about how they could do it if, if we need to do it again. So, I'm really grateful. Thank you for your time and thank you for putting so much effort into the Kids Camp. I, I know it was a success, a success because i heard about it from lots of people. So, thanks Joelle so much.

Joelle Wight 38:40
Thank you, Carla. It was great to talk with you about it and it was so much fun to do. And I think that the kids really made it worthwhile and so even if we're not in person this coming summer, I think we'll definitely do something online again because the kids were 100%, they totally made it worth it. Awesome. All right. Thank you. Bye!

Josh Mangelson 39:07
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