

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 today you're listening to the series Holy Grounds, where we talk about all things that are holy. And I'm really excited to introduce to you a good friend of mine, Kat Goheen, who is a dear, dear friend and a wonderful person, and I'm so excited to have her here today. So, hello Kat, and welcome.

Kat Goheen 00:56

I am so happy to be here with you Carla.

Carla Long 00:59

So, Kat, before we jump in, I would love to hear about you. So, would you please introduce yourself for us?

Kat Goheen 01:05

Of course. I live in Vancouver, BC, but I grew up in Independence, Missouri. And the short form of all this is, I have been a member of Community of Christ my whole life, and ordained as a teenager in this first wave of women to come through in my area, and then went to Graceland. And guess what? I met my husband, ended up moving to Canada, and I've been here for my adult life. So, started off as a professional singer, then went to seminary for a couple of degrees in biblical studies, and then got into the spiritual formation thing that we're getting into today. So, took the Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program and then decided to carry on and become a spiritual director. And so, now I am a spiritual director and I've actually been brought back to help mentor new spiritual directors who are in that training program here in Canada. So, I think that's the short form. I have two lovely daughters, still do a lot of music, play fiddle, play in a band, write some songs and very active in my congregation serving as a co-pastor right now.

Carla Long 02:15

My very first question is kind of an important one. Kat, is there anything you can't do? My goodness, that's amazing!

Kat Goheen 02:25

You are too kind. No, I'm pretty aware of my flaws. Don't worry.

Carla Long 02:30

Well, what you just said sounds super incredible and I am really excited about this podcast because I'm really interested in the Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program. I'm really interested in having a spiritual director. I myself had a spiritual director in California when I lived there and it was such a

growth time for me. I look back at my time, when I lived in California, and my spirituality kind of, maybe this is the wrong phrase, but like exploded while I was there. And I think it has a lot to do with her and my relationship with her but so, let's not talk about spiritual direction first. Can you just give maybe a brief synopsis of the Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program for Community of Christ, in case people have never heard of it before?

Kat Goheen 03:12

Absolutely. And, it may have changed. When I went through, it was the pilot project. So, really it was this exciting time of being guinea pigs. When we arrived at our first retreat, there were a series of six retreats that we met in over a period of three years. And there were maybe 55 participants when I went through and nine or 10 staff, depending on which retreat it was, and those staff were all Community of Christ. Plus, they would bring in outside mentors who would teach us, you know, one or two per session. Just so vibrant. So, we're guinea pigs. We show up and say, "We're not sure exactly why we're here." And I think for each one of us, like it's not a career move, it's a move of spirit. It's a move from the gut. Now, I kind of live my life that way anyway, so I'm kind of used to blind alleys, and like a labyrinth. I hit another dead end, oh, just turn around to go the other way. Okay, that'll work. And that's what the program felt like. It was very uncomfortable for some but I think we, and even the staff, I think, didn't have a really clear sense. It's just this deep desire. All of them were trained as spiritual directors. All of them have had these diverse experiences coming from different parts of the country, in different sort of training procedures. And bringing that together in this crucible and saying, "How can we instill these beautiful practices and this deepening that we've experienced together? How can we like, nurture all these 55 participants?" So, maybe they would consider parts of it to be hit and miss, I don't know. But we really came close together as a group. Had small group interactions that carried on through the three years. And homework, and as an adult learner, it's actually pretty fun to have homework. And it's really fun to have homework that it doesn't have a huge book list attached to it. And it's extremely fun to have homework that's somewhat creative and gets outside the box. So, I think, and we were in beautiful retreat centers. And I have to tell you, Carla, coming from Community of Christ experience, was one of the first experiences where I went to a retreat setting, and did not do KP. Now, I know that sounds like a little thing. But when you're often involved in leadership and such things, it was like, you would eat a meal and get up and go to a classroom and carry on. And there wasn't this sort of bonus hour gap to make sure that everybody has, you know, finished their jobs. I don't know, it kind of felt like a spa, but you know, in that way. But just because, you know, in our context, there's always, well, work and prayer. So, I think we still have that sense of work and prayer, because the schedule was fairly extensive in the day. But that was somewhat liberating to do that, in our context. Just a small thing. And we were in beautiful retreat centers. I know the settings have changed so I don't want to talk up those specific places too much. But so much beauty in nature and time. There was space to experience that too. Yeah. Is there anything else specific you'd like to know about it?

Carla Long 06:27

Well, it just sounds like to me that what was really happening was there's a group of people who really wanted to deepen their spirituality, and there was, like, fertile ground that was laid for you to do so in some ways. And like, it is such a gift being a mother of two, and a full-time job, and whatever else we have on our plates. Sometimes the gift of time is really all that you need. And intention, the gift of intention and the gift of time, and things just seem to happen. So, it just sounds like to me, it's offering

you space to do that. And I want to say, when you don't have to do KP, you have like extra three, four hours in the day, like an extra three or four hours to do amazing things. So, I totally understand it. I totally get it. It is a gift.

Kat Goheen 07:14

Yes.

Carla Long 07:16

So, that Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program sounds like it was a really important time for you. And so, can you talk specifically about what made it important for you? How your life changed after that?

Kat Goheen 07:29

Absolutely. And part of it was just gradual shifts. It's almost as if I were some, kind of, you know, tanker or cruise ship and you just, kind of, turned by degrees. Or some really big airplane and you just, sort of, have this minor correction, minor correction so, not really a road to Emmaus sort of blinding flash of light. But, I mean, I came into this having gone through like 10 years of seminary, and you know having kids, and 10 years of seminary, and really in my head. And you know, somewhat feeling that everything had to have a purpose, like, really struggling with the idea of doing this spiritual formation. Because even in seminary, where I was here in Vancouver, it almost seemed that this spiritual formation was sort of the soft side of what we were doing, more of the feminine side. And it was more of the heart analysis and translation than sort of grasping the material and exegesis and all that stuff that was more valued. Now, that could have just been me, but I don't think so. I think that might have been a value that, sort of, was out there. So, I actually had to find a space of listening to my heart, listening to my gut, and doing this, even though it didn't feel like it had the goodies attached to it the way that that other did. So, for me, it was this real dissent from my head into my heart. And as I have learned again, and again, that is the journey. That *is* the journey. That's kind of the eye of the needle. That's the way in and I am so grateful. It was actually my husband saying, "You need to do this." And I'm like, "But it doesn't make any sense. And it's expensive." And you know, "I have to go to America." And you know, "It's a lot of time away from home." And he's like, "You know what? I hear you talking about this and you sound like you're conflicted. But actually, honestly, this is the next step. This is it." So, God bless. God bless, John, for helping my discernment to become clear. So, how did the program, once I was there, work? Well, I just fell into the space of trusting the process. And I think that made all the difference. I think that's becoming my life motto. Let life unfold. Trust the process. Don't push the river. Like actually, just do the work. Just be there and be present. Maybe the thing that's the most formative is being around so many people who are really dedicated to deepening, really dedicated to the spiritual path. Because there's a sense in which being around these wonderful people is like a jumpstart. It just, it gave me the opportunity to access places in myself that I was not comfortable with or familiar with. It's almost like training wheels, spiritual training wheels. Now, of course, you have to do your own work. You can't spend all day every day around wonderfully enlightened souls. You just can't do that. Well, if you can, go for it. But that's usually not the way life works. You'd have to be your own, or find your own space for that. But knowing we had these times of coming together, yeah, that was something that really kept me honest, and kept me from falling asleep to myself or kept me from getting complacent. Now, the other gift, you were talking about the gifts, not having KP, the gift of time. But the other gift is the gift of

deadlines. Because for myself, I can coast along quite well. But the minute I have, you know, like, “Hey, I’m seeing Carla today”, or “Hey, I’ve got this sermon coming up”, or, “Hey, there’s this book chapter that’s due in a couple months.” You know, the minute you’ve got that kind of deadline? Boy! Boy, oh, boy! Don’t you find there’s something inside you that just kind of rises up to the challenge, and kind of starts pushing around and growing and fermenting. And then all of a sudden, there’s a new part of, a new corner of my soul that I had not discovered before, along with the gifts of those relationships. So, I’ll definitely say that, yeah, there were some of the deadlines and book reports and such that I might have chaffed at at the time. But I’m grateful for all of it. It’s all my soul work, once again, adult learner super motivated to do my own work. I’m not doing it for you, Carla. I’m not doing it for the teachers. I’m doing it because I signed on for it and really care about it. So yeah, how does it change me? It opened the door. Like being around these wonderful Community of Christ spiritual directors, because I’ve been around a ton in seminary. But to see our flavor, like what does it look like in our culture, our context, where typically, I would think of an evangelist as having the kind of ministry that a spiritual director would carry. That one on one, very intimate, somewhat of a mediator, I mean without the sacramental piece of it, but still that sort of approach. Like what does it look like? So, I loved seeing that embodied in all of our nine or 10 wonderful staff who were there. And it got my imagination going. When I started as SFCP, I’d had a spiritual director pretty steadily for 11 years. And I was very familiar with the idea of it. And, like I say, it was in the culture that I was in in seminary. But I wasn’t sure that I would be a good candidate to become a spiritual director. I kind of was concerned I would worry too much about my people’s stuff, you know, kind of take it on, and not to let it sit lightly. But it was wonderful mentoring, I felt being around them. And I know, it’s not just true for me. I can think of five or six other people that came through SFCP with me, who are now spiritual directors as well. So, I say, “Right on!” Right? I mean, the culture is just growing. Whether that was an intentional outcome of the original idea of SFCP, I think it has taken a life of its own. And yeah, I feel that those three years really place my heart and placed me in a position to be fully prepared to get into the work of spiritual direction, myself.

Carla Long 13:46

Wow, what a journey. And I really love how you talk about the big journey is from head to heart. That would be my big journey, too. I don’t know if it’s true for everyone out there. But getting out of my head and moving into the heart place is, it doesn’t look like it’s very far. It looks like it’s, you know, but it’s a really long journey, actually. So, I think that’s a beautiful way to put it. And I think that helps people put it in a little bit more concrete terms. I think that everyone can understand that. So, I really love how you said that. I also love that you’re talking about spiritual direction now because I don’t know if everyone in Community of Christ even understands what a spiritual director does. So, could you talk what a spiritual director does and, like, how did you become one? What study did you have to do to become one?

Kat Goheen 14:32

Oh, yeah, and what does the spiritual director do? There are all kinds of names for it as well. It’s spiritual companion, some people don’t like the term director, companion. There are lots of different names for it, spiritual friendship, anamchara, that sort of Celtic idea, the spiritual friend. I’m happy with the term spiritual director, but the irony is, is that the role of the spiritual director is not to direct you. Maybe it was sort of in the good old days, where you might be sort of assigned, you know, you would go to your mentor, your spiritual director, they might assign you work to do. But these days, from everything that I’ve seen, it’s certainly, with my experience in the training, it’s someone who really

believes in you, and really believes in your soul work, and has this deep belief, however the divine is manifested, has this deep belief, the Divine cares for you. And honestly, I believe that is the work of a spiritual director. Not to be the smartest one in the room. Not to see the way forward for you. Certainly not to tell you what to do or solve your problems. Not a problem solver, but someone who is able to learn to ask open ended questions, somewhat like what you're doing right now. If you asked me, "yes" or "no" questions, this would be a short interview. But who is able to follow, what we call in our program, the currents of aliveness. That's just a nice way to talk about what happens when someone's face lights up, or when there's that little wince of pain, when there's some nonverbal cue, or something that's just said in the stream of consciousness, that's like, wait a minute, that's the soul flashing, like a salmon jumping out of a river. That's what you're looking for. Those currents of aliveness. And then to hold that, to bring it and have the wisdom to know when to sort of open an opportunity to talk about one of these, and when simply to hold it and think, you know, next time we get together might be the time, might be it. So, what is the spiritual director do? Create a sacred space, and then be a safe container. That's really the work of the spiritual director, and then trust that the soul wants to grow. Trust that the soul is gonna do all the work. That it's not a matter of interfering, or fixing. And that honestly, there's so much mystery, that the director doesn't even always know, the full picture, like, wouldn't necessarily label things as being pathological, like, wouldn't necessarily be the person to diagnose or want to change things. But we'd want to be available and present. And, yeah, and just encouraging growth, however that might come. Do you want to ask any more questions around that? To get into that a little bit more?

Carla Long 17:40

No, but you're just actually reminding me of my time with my spiritual director, because there were moments when I would sit there and I wanted her, her name is Ruth, I wanted her to ask me those questions. I wanted to answer those questions, but I couldn't do it on my own. So, having her verbalize those things, and really what she would say is those open-ended questions like, "Well, now, Carla, how do you think God feels about that?" And I'd be like, "I don't know!", but I just needed to speak the words out loud. So, no, I think that was an excellent description of what a spiritual director does, or spiritual companion, whatever you want to call it. So, you actually did have to do some studies to become a spiritual director, correct? Can you say what you needed to do, in order to do that?

Kat Goheen 18:22

Oh, my gosh, it was so fun. So, we walk in, day one, oh, my gosh, we walk in day one. And what are we told? We're told, "Your heads are smart enough." And it's like, What? So, they're like, "We're going to speak to your hearts." Like this is day one! It's like, what am I getting into? And any time you enter an ecumenical setting, you know, it's like, Will I be accepted? I'm Community of Christ. Will they understand? Will I be accepted? You know, it's like that in any ecumenical setting. Fortunately, I had two other friends from Community of Christ, one other friend from SFCP, and one from my congregation, who also have become spiritual directors through this program. What a gift. So, we were a sizable percentage of the group, which was nice. So, what did we do? So, we were getting into our hearts. So we were, I mean, the book list was actually quite small. I mean, it was good, it was dense, but it was small. And we weren't required to read anything. We did projects that we created, that were completely open-ended. Like, Carla, seriously, it was one paragraph description, like, talk about the work of soul. And then it's like, and you might create four to six pages, or maybe you'll paint something and do an artist's statement, or maybe something else like this, completely open ended. And, you

know, I'm sitting here going, where's the catch? Where's the hook? And I'm looking at the book list, and I kept going to my mentor. Well, you know, and they're like, "Eh, you know, this is not seminary. This is not." So, it was even a step more diffuse from SFCP, of like, you know, opening the gates and let the cattle run, like, here you go. And honestly, then the work is completely for yourself completely for yourself. So, there were these nine projects over the space of two and a half years. And we also were required to have our own spiritual director ongoing. And then we would have practice groups. So, really, that became the backbone of the program, where we learn to listen. We learn to observe ourselves, and we learn to report on how we are being triggered as we're listening to other people. So, really focusing on ourselves, not so much on what's said, but focusing on ourselves and how we're receiving things. Then we move into the second phase of actual spiritual direction. And the first time my mentor called me her spiritual director, because I'd listened to her in this first round, it just clicked. It just changed something for me. I was like, I've crossed a line, and I'm never gonna go back. Like, now this is a new identity, that I'm living into, learning the skills to support. But things have changed, they just changed. And I didn't expect that. And so, we'd have, like, these virtual meetings, in the times in between, you know, back when we used to get together for real and have these retreats, which currently is not happening, not happening in real life. And then the third aspect was peer mentoring, the third phase of the program, where we would learn to, where we would bring critical incidents that were where we started to have our own directees. And God bless them, all those practice directees, that, you know, shared their lives with us and allowed us to practice asking open ended questions, practice focusing on them, and not on ourselves. What am I going to say next, but more on you. Let us be clumsy, you know, let us figure things out. And then, at the very end, we were able to present an overview of our entire two and a half year process publicly to everyone. Yeah. And then at the end of that, they invite four people to be companions to come back and mentor the next group. So, that's what I'm doing right now, that I mentioned in my intro. So, I get to live through the whole two and a half years again. Which is such a gift. And now I'm the one that holds their projects, and the one that does a one on one, you know, debrief and gets to ask open-ended questions to the participants and help them really see what they've done, like, really see the words they've written and hear the truths that they have lived into, so that we're not just living going forward, you know, but that chance to reflect, that chance to look back. And we were in a beautiful retreat space, like until the end when we were virtual, surrounded by nature. Ah, and I must tell you about, our greatest teacher was silence. I didn't think I would be good with silence, Carla. Do you think you would be good with silence?

Carla Long 22:58

It's super hard.

Kat Goheen 23:04

Okay, and that was not an open-ended question. Sorry about that. But in the middle of our two and a half year process, we had a five day silent retreat together, five days. Now, let me tell you, Carla, now we're a bunch of introverts doing this work. I think there was one blessed extrovert, God bless her. But anyway, bunch of introverts. So, silence isn't quite so bad as you would think. However, for these five days, outside of our daily spiritual direction, which is common in silent retreats, we did not look at anyone. We did not look at anyone, Carla. We kept modesty of the gaze. And I thought, and that was like, oh, my goodness, because a big part of our work is the Enneagram. We use the Enneagram as a tool. That's a whole separate podcast. And I'm probably not qualified to do it. But I love the Enneagram

deeply, deeply. And I am a heart type, meaning I'm often looking outside myself, looking at the needs of people around me. Heart types are wonderful people to be around. However, they sometimes ignore themselves and get all caught up in the drama that is outside. And heart types often have a very difficult time being at peace, if there's any disturbance that's happening outside. So, this is major spiritual work, to be a heart type, grow into that, the beauty of that, and the gifts of it, without getting a little tied up, being a bit neurotic with it. So, a full five days of feeling people's presences, sitting and eating meals together, not making eye contact, not speaking with your roommate, you know, just doing that. And I tell you, I loved it, absolutely loved it. I was so sad to come out of that five days of silence. It was a little bit of anxiety actually. It was a beautiful experience having no pressure, no schedule, like, just walking the labyrinth. What's next? I think I'll journal for a while. How long? Until I get tired of sitting on this rock? And then maybe I'll get up? And like, what does my body need? Oh, like usually I have a snack about now, but I'm okay. Like there was just this real peace and quiet of, I mean, I was my own companion. And I look outside to nature. It's the ravens flying over. Oh, my goodness, all day long, ravens, ravens, ravens, just beautiful. And the ocean, like we were in a beautiful place. So, just observing what's there. And just the quiet, like, I finally found that place of getting through all those layers of distraction and busyness, to see them for what they were, you know, to maybe struggle with them a little bit. And then to settle in. And then, I don't know, God took on a different quality. There was this companionship of silence in silence that was very nurturing, that was very loving, and really saw me, you know, completely for who I am. I couldn't see all of it. But it was just really transformative. So, I have to say, silence, it is so worth trying, especially in a space where there's someone who can hold you, there's a container that's there, if there's someone who can offer you a listening ear, so you don't feel utterly on your own. I felt really close to everyone. And by the end, my mentor was thrilled. He was like, I think this is something that you have needed, to get out of people-pleasing in a new way, in a new way of understanding. Oh, I see this for what it is. And I can be with myself and silence and quite content. So, that's another good teacher.

Carla Long 26:52

I mean, you made silence sound really attractive, really attractive. That is amazing. Five full days. Whew, anybody who knows me in real life would know that I would have a difficult time with that, but there is something that sounds very freeing about it. Especially when you, kind, of quote, unquote, have to do it, and everybody's doing it. So, there might be a little bit of that peer pressure too, which I would probably need in order to do it, in order to do it well. It just sounds great. So, when you talk about spiritual direction, it kind of sounds a little bit like therapy, but it's not therapy. Right? Can we talk a little bit about the difference between therapy and spiritual direction? And, like, yeah, how are they the same? And how are they different? Probably more, how are they different?

Kat Goheen 27:42

Well, absolutely. And I remember the first time I went to a spiritual director, not knowing like, what am I supposed to say? Are you judging me? Like, am I supposed to do something or share my deepest, darkest secrets? Is this confessional? Like, what exactly is this? And once again, you hear my personality come out, wanting to make sure I do a good job, you know. Did I tick all the boxes? Did I get it right? So, maybe not everyone does. But in the people that I've seen for the first time, there's a lot of question mark. And I think the biggest thing is, I've already alluded to, that a spiritual director is there to receive what's offered, and what's offered is good enough. Like what's offered is what the soul wants to

share. Like, and even as you say, Carla, with your director, Ruth, that you wanted to dig in. You wanted to be there with the big questions, but you know, we can't see them. Like we see everything cloudy, we can't really see ourselves. I think that's always true. We are mysteries, you know. We unfold or we don't know. So, how is it different? I think it's mostly that idea that the spiritual director may not always know best, like, may not always be the expert that's addressing, like, I say a pathology, that's addressing something that's wrong with you, and trying to fix you. And I think that's actually an important piece to sort of, to have in your heart as you go into this. It is an opportunity for transformation. And I know that in my own work with people that sometimes things get very deep, very fast, with no real intention, no real intention, like let's get out our shovels and go excavating, but it's such a beautiful thing to be listened to, and to have someone care about you, because they see how precious you are. It's not just even a charisma, personality, one on one thing, but just to have that sense of the preciousness of who you are as a creation, of who you are. Because you're already beloved. You're already gifted by God to see you in a different way than you see yourself. And there's something about being with this person, whether it's on the phone or a computer, or face to face, that really releases the heart and the soul into presence and into voice. And you catch yourself saying things like, "Oh, I didn't," speaking yourself into truth, "I didn't know I felt that way. Oh, isn't that interesting? Who said that? That was me." At least that's happened to me a bunch of times and I've witnessed that as well. So, how is it different? I think it's just not having necessarily that therapeutic lens on it, that there's something wrong with you that needs to be fixed. And understanding that the person who is sharing with a spiritual director has their own wisdom and their own copyright on their life, their own, their own frame to tell. And it's just that desire to grow that in some way, brings the growth. Yeah, yeah.

Carla Long 30:51

Yeah, that's really interesting. For me, it was never like therapy. But I have heard people ask the question, "How is it different?" So, thank you for that explanation. I really appreciate it. So, you have been a spiritual director for a couple years now, right?

Kat Goheen 31:07

Probably a full spiritual direction for one. Believe it or not, it feels like forever. I know. I know. Yeah. Like, I finished during COVID. So, it's a year. Yeah,

Carla Long 31:15

Yeah, it's been a year. That's true. So, what do you love most? What do you treasure most about being a spiritual director?

Kat Goheen 31:24

Oh, the thing I treasure most about being a spiritual director, is the way that I am absolutely fully present with another person in time. Like, for me, it's just the perfect experience of kairos time, where everything slows down. And even if the phone rings, even if there's an actual interruption, my dog barks, he barks a lot, even if something happens, that there's absolutely no disruption that I feel so close to what matters most. And I feel absolutely no sense of multitasking. Like, I really feel my truest self when I'm doing this work. And then afterwards, there is something where I understand, like, in my body, I understand in my heart, that what's been shared with me is not my personal burden that I carry. Like, I absolutely understand that this is God's work, like, wonderful, this is God's work. And, I get to be

part of that. So, it's very sacred. And my sessions are different. Sometimes they're kind of more fun and conversational. Of course, that happens. Energy levels change, I mean, all the time. But, but for me, it's that it's that deep dive, really being close to another soul, and, and letting them approach mine as well. I mean, it's all them. But with us being that close. Yeah, that's the greatest treasure for me.

Carla Long 33:09

This just sounds so wonderful. I hope that the people listening to this recognize what a gift spiritual direction is. I really hope that they're hearing this in your voice, because I'm certainly hearing it in your voice. So, you've been a spiritual person for a long time, it sounds like that. That it's always been kind of like a yearning in your soul. But being a spiritual director, I think, is a horse of a different color, if you will. So, what has been your biggest learning curve when it comes to being a spiritual director?

Kat Goheen 33:38

Okay, honestly, it's some of that personality stuff I was mentioning. I like to be smart. And I like to sort of have that control piece. And, yeah, those two things together, those have been the biggest, biggest, biggest stumbling block that I found early in the work that I was having observations, and some how they would seem to be, they would feel utterly true. And I would just feel this need to share, you know, this, guess what, there's this really cool idea I had for you. And so, my biggest learning curve has been learning that it is much more powerful if those observations, or different ones, come from the person who's being listened to, come from the directee. That's where the work is. You know, good for me, if I come up with some neat ideas, but that's not really the work. So, that piece of humility, really, for me has been a stretch, and probably it will continue to be a stretch. And it doesn't mean that I don't have good ideas or good observations. And what do you do, you know, if I'm sitting down with you, Carla, and you tell me a story that I have lived through, right? And I'm just dying to be like, "Oh, yeah. Oh my gosh." And you know, honestly, most of the time, that's not even an appropriate place for me to go, 'cuz then it's about me and my stuff, and it's not about you and your stuff. And maybe it would close doors that were open, because it might turn into one-upmanship, you know. That's also a danger that you can get into. It's like, just having that wisdom, and once again, that comfort with silence, to take the moment or two to really check in, you know. Is this a movement of the Spirit that is prompting me to be vulnerable to share in this moment? Or is this something where I can simply receive and hold my truth and hold this truth that's being offered, and see where it needs to go for the benefit of this other person. So, I guess that's a couple learning curves.

Carla Long 35:45

You did actually bring up something else for me. When I was talking to Ruth, I remember, we are having this retreat in Bodega Bay, California, which is beautiful. And I was really stuck. I was really stuck. And I was talking to Ruth about it. And she's like, Carl, I can't, I really can't give you this advice, but I'm going to anyway. And she actually gave me, and she felt so bad about it, but she gave me this activity that I have done multiple times since then. And it's always brought so many blessings. And I'm so glad that she, I know you're not really supposed to, but I'm so glad she stepped out of herself. And like she responded to that nudge to go ahead and say what she wasn't supposed to say. So, I imagine, I'm guessing, if Ruth is okay, that you need to respond to those nudges too though, right? Hopefully?

Kat Goheen 36:33

Absolutely. And I'm sure her discernment was wise. And sometimes the Spirit blesses things, even when they're not by the book, too. I mean, that's also true. So, I always try to have grace for myself. If I look back and say, "Oh, I could have waited", or "Maybe that was more me than them". And sometimes, honestly, if the Spirit is pushing on that door, then I don't want to just lock it and say, "No, no, no, I can't offer anything." And directors are human too. So, yeah, no, you know, half the time we'll err on sharing something. But once again, Carla, do I have to share the whole story? No. And so just that refinement, that learning process. And as you say, I'm a new director, I just, I love being around directors. They're just such marvelous people. Not that directors listen all the time, right? You kind of get on? Oh, my goodness, could you imagine, like, if your mom were a spiritual director, and they always ask you open ended questions, and they never offered anything of themselves. Like, that would be a nightmare. I think Sandra Loman was one of the people that came to SFCP and visited with us. She said, that's a form of passive aggression, because I've done that unknowingly with my family before and they're like, "Mom, stop directing us. Just have a conversation, for crying out loud." But that being said, it's lovely to be around spiritual directors, because, you know, it's like, wait a minute, oh, I'm on, you know, yes, this is a situation that actually requires the discernment of a deeper listening, and a bracketing of myself, and an availability for the other person, even if it's not planned. Yeah.

Carla Long 38:05

I'm so glad that Ruth didn't mess up. And I'm sure she's not listening to this podcast. But, just in case she is, I still love you, Ruth. So, I hope, I'm pretty sure what you have offered to us today has maybe sparked some people's interest if they had never heard of spiritual direction before. And maybe they want to look into getting a spiritual director of their own. So, could you offer just a little bit of advice on how to start looking for a spiritual director, and maybe a little bit about what that process is like, about finding one and getting one?

Kat Goheen 38:36

Absolutely. And because it's so individual, it's not always a good fit. So, it's important to go into it saying, you know, it's okay to try this, and maybe it won't work out, and we can just say goodbye in a polite way and continue looking. Sometimes I'm an all or nothing kind of person. I wait and wait, and research and research and then I fully commit. But it's like, no, it's not like that. It doesn't have to be like that. Within the Community of Christ, I would look to Katie Harmon-McLaughlin, because she keeps the clearing house, the list of people in the Community of Christ, who have trained as spiritual directors. And there's also the SDI, Spiritual Directors International website, that has people from all faith tradition. It can be really helpful to have someone from a Community of Christ background as a spiritual director, just as a shorthand, that they might understand things, you wouldn't have to explain things so much. But my director is from the United Church of Canada. And, you know, it's not always about the details. Sometimes it's just about the lived experience. So, you might find someone who is Buddhist or Catholic or, you know, someone that's closer by that you could be face to face with, when that's COVID appropriate, of course, because that could be valuable as well. And so, it's just a matter then of visiting with them about fees. That's an interesting thing, where Community of Christ, we're not used to, like, fee per service, because that's kind of not our jam. That's not what we do. And some directors in Community of Christ, don't charge or they might say, by donation or donate to another organization. Some have a set fee. Some are, for myself, I follow a justice model. So, whatever you would get paid

for an hour, guess what, then I'll get paid that much too. That's what you'll offer to me. Anything else about that? And I would say just once again, many directors choose to offer their first session complimentary, so you could just try it out and see how it is. And really do treat that as, like, hold it lightly, I would say. Find someone who's a good fit for you, because we're not all the same. And, you know, maybe we shouldn't all be good fits for each other. Not one size fits all. But it can just be a wonderful tool for growth. I really encouraged it.

Carla Long 40:53

I appreciate that a lot. When I do remember, looking for a spiritual director, I actually did not want someone in Community of Christ, because I'm like, what if I mentioned someone and they knew them? You know, like, what if it did turn into a little bit of a therapy session, and I was unhappy with something. So, I wanted someone outside of Community of Christ. And when I found Ruth on the SDI, Spiritual Directors International website, she offered very good and gentle boundaries, but still boundaries. She said, "Carla, if we don't, if we don't get along, then we'll just say this has been a wonderful to meet you." And we'll both go our separate ways. And I thought that was really freeing for me to be like, look, if I don't feel comfortable in your presence, and this is not going to work at all. So, it was really freeing just to be like, okay, we'll both either say "Yes" or "No", after the first session. And if we both say, "Yes", we'll continue. If one of us says, "No", we won't continue. I thought that was just a beautiful way to do that. So, I appreciated her and her boundaries a lot. She helped me set some boundaries, actually. So, I just hope people check it out, because it can be, and sometimes the fees aren't that expensive like you said. So, don't let that become a barrier for you, please, gentle listeners. So, I was hoping that Kat might lead us in a little spiritual practice, if she doesn't mind. This is the series, Holy Grounds, and so, in the series, Holy Grounds, we talk about spiritual practices and, you know, spiritual stuff. So, she is going to lead us in just a really short spiritual practice. And I'm gonna hand it on over to her.

Kat Goheen 42:37

Thank you. Just one, I mean, man, that's hard, Carla. But this one is a practice from Stephen Levine that I've taken from his book, *Unattended Sorrow*, and it's about grief. And I know for myself, when it comes to what's the biggest obstacle to staying awake to being present in my life, I think it's dealing with these sharp, painful feelings that don't go away easily. So, I'd like to offer that to you. So, you can get comfortable, whatever that looks like. Feeling the body you sit in, you begin to bring your attention into the abdomen, feeling the belly rise and fall with each breath. And you begin to soften the abdominal muscles. Letting go of whatever holding tightens your belly, and maintains your suffering. Softening the tissue all the way into the belly. Make room for the breath as it breathes itself in soft belly, noticing how much grief there is in the form of resistance and an ache held deep in the belly. So much fear and armoring. Let it all float in soft belly, not hardening it to suffering. Just letting it be in soft belly, in merciful belly. Let go with each inhalation, softening the belly. Let go with each exhalation, making peace. Soften the belly to uncover the heart. Each exhalation lets out the pain. Make room for our life in soft belly. Expectation, judgment, doubt and all sorts of old griefs congregate in the belly. Softening allows them to disperse. Pains, fears and doubts dissolve into the softness, the spaciousness of a merciful belly. Even the hardness, floats in the softness and there's nothing to change. We are just attending to ourselves. There is no urgency in soft belly. There is room for our pain in soft belly. The spaciousness in the belly mirrors the opening of the heart. When you open your eyes, maintaining this increased awareness, notice at what point the belly tightens once again. At what point does the sense

of loss reassert itself and you feel a need to protect against future pain? At what point does the armoring reestablish its long presence? Soften with the eyes wide open to the world. Softening to the pain we all share and the legacy of healing exposed in our deepening softness. And we give thanks for this experience.

Carla Long 48:14

That was really beautiful, Kat. Thank you so much. You know, sometimes I think people think spiritual practices have to be, like, 30 minutes long or five days long. And they don't. They don't have to be. They can just be moments within our day, just like this. So, I appreciate that very much. Thank you so much. And so, Kat, we've come to the close of our podcast. Is there something else you wanted to say that I didn't ask or something else that came to mind that you wanted to say?

Kat Goheen 48:44

Ah, I love this work so much. And it just deepens my love for, I don't know, creation, humanity, the hope that's within us, the script in the world that is positive and optimistic and leads to life. And I pray for all of you, that you are finding that hope and that encouragement as well.

Carla Long 49:15

Thank you so much, Kat. It's always a joy and a pleasure to talk to you. And I appreciate you, all of your wisdom, that you have given to us today.

Kat Goheen 49:22

And Carla you are a shining light and it's my pleasure to spend time with you.

Carla Long 49:27

Thanks again.

Josh Mangelson 49:37

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