

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.

Mike Hoffman 00:34

Well, welcome to Coffee in The Swarm. This is Mike Hoffman at Graceland University and I'm really excited today to have our Graceland summer reps with us, Santana Hernandez, Molly Sharp and Kinsey Collins. So, all three of you, welcome to Coffee in the Swarm although we know we're not actually having coffee, and we're not in the Swarm.

Kinsey Collins 00:55

That's okay.

Mike Hoffman 00:56

That's okay, yeah. So, anyway, great to have you here. I'm just excited to be interviewing people in person without masks and because you're all vaccinated and I'm vaccinated so, you know, that's pretty cool. So, why don't we start off with just each of you telling me a little bit about yourself so we are familiar with our listeners and know more about you. So, yeah. Kinzie, go ahead?

Kinsey Collins 01:19

Yeah. So, I'm Kinsey Collins. I'll be a senior this year at Graceland, which is wild to say.

Mike Hoffman 01:27

Wild because it's already your senior year?

Kinsey Collins 01:29

Yes, I never thought, like, you're in middle school, and you're, like, college? It's eons away, and then so now we're here, but I've changed my major many of times. And, but now where I'm supposed to be. I'm majoring in Theater, minoring in Music, and I love it. I'm really involved with residence life on campus, student life, which I love. Yeah.

Mike Hoffman 01:53

Great. Molly, tell us a little bit about you.

Molly Sharp 01:57

So, my name is Molly Sharp. And I'm also going to be a senior this year. I am an English major with a minor in Hispanic Studies. I just love languages and like learning about them, and how they, kind of, work and develop over time. I'm also on the cheer team, because I just love being, not really athletic, but cheering on our other sports teams and just being a positive kind of person. And I also work in the

Writing Center, which is super big with my major. It helps me with my papers and I get to help students with their papers and just get to learn, like teaching people how to be better writers.

Mike Hoffman 02:33

Very good. Thank you. And Santina.

Santina Hernandez 02:38

Oh yeah, so, my name is Santina Hernandez. I will be a senior as well. And I'm a double major in Sociology and Hispanic Studies with a minor in Psychology. I was recently the IDEA President my junior year, and this year I'll be the Latinx President. And, yeah.

Mike Hoffman 02:56

Can you explain a little bit more about the organizations because I'm sure some of our listeners probably are not familiar with what IDEA is?

Santina Hernandez 03:03

Yeah.

Mike Hoffman 03:03

Or Latinx, for that matter, but yeah.

Santina Hernandez 03:06

Yeah, so, IDEA stands for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Alliance and it's a new GSG position.

Mike Hoffman 03:11

Part of the Graceland student government.

Santina Hernandez 03:12

Yes. And so, this will, this upcoming year will be the second year we've tried it on campus. And what we do is we support the other clubs on campus, like Polynesian Club, Black Student Union, the Latinx Club, SAGE, and the International Club. And so, what we do is we help amplify their events and stuff like that on campus and also help support them. And also, just support and make sure it's another voice for underrepresented groups on campus.

Mike Hoffman 03:40

Great. Very good. And then you said you're going to be President of Latinx Alliance. Is that the name of it?

Santina Hernandez 03:46

No, it's just Latinx.

Mike Hoffman 03:47

Okay, okay. Very good. And that's all about Hispanic...

Santina Hernandez 03:51

Hispanic and Latin.

Mike Hoffman 03:54

And Latin. Very good, great. All right. So, tell us, tell me a little bit about where you're from and maybe about what your church life was like, or church experiences like? Yeah, we can go, Santina why don't you go first.

Santina Hernandez 04:09

So, I'm from Kansas City, Kansas, and my church, it's, I go to Bethel, which is in the Wyandotte area. And it's very, it's small, but it's not too small. Like, we all love each other. It's really chill, super laid back. And I just love it. I miss it, because we haven't had it in person. But hopefully soon we will sometime. But yeah, I like it a lot.

Mike Hoffman 04:35

Great, Molly, what about you?

Molly Sharp 04:37

Um, so I'm from Locust Grove, Oklahoma, and I go to the congregation there and we're also very small. But all of our members are very loving people, and they just love to make sure that all of us younger generation, I guess, even my mom, is considered younger generation. They like to make sure that we're taken care of and that we're taking care of ourselves and being mentally healthy and physically healthy. And I just really love all of them a lot.

Mike Hoffman 05:07

Very good. And Kinsey?

Kinsey Collins 05:09

I'm from the superior Kansas City-Kansas, Missouri.

Mike Hoffman 05:16

Wow, cross-town rivals. I guess it's really good that Molly's in between.

Kinsey Collins 05:23

Kansas City, Missouri. I go to Woods Chapel Community of Christ, which is a 30 minute drive for my family every Sunday. We decided to move over there because they had a really big group of young people. My cousin's go there and it's a really big congregation compared to the Liberty Community of Christ, where...

Mike Hoffman 05:44

Is that where you used to go?

Kinsey Collins 05:45

Yeah, it's where my grandparents go too. But, they're a loving community.

Mike Hoffman 05:51

Very good. So, what brought you to Graceland? I mean, I'm sure you have different reasons for what... Kinzie started laughing. We'll start with you. What brought you to Graceland?

Kinsey Collins 06:04

Well, I didn't want to come to Graceland at all.

Mike Hoffman 06:06

Oh, the truth, the truth comes out.

Kinsey Collins 06:10

Truth be told. No, I was not gonna come to Graceland. I, not because I didn't like it, but I have come here for Spec and all that stuff. And I'm, like, I'm gonna go to a big university, where like, theater is huge, and like. And to be honest, the reason I applied for Graceland was at Spec because I didn't want to do the icebreakers. So, I was like, might as well apply for Graceland. But no, then I was like, in my audition process, I came here and I met Tracy Salter, who's the theater professor, and I met Sarah Blessings, choir director, and I fell in love with them, fell in love with the program. So, now I was like, this is where I'm supposed to be.

Mike Hoffman 06:47

Very cool.

Kinsey Collins 06:48

I'm very happy that I chose.

Mike Hoffman 06:50

Yeah. And then I heard at one point, I heard something about you, actually. I heard that maybe you wouldn't stay at Graceland.

Kinsey Collins 06:56

I was gonna transfer, but I was like, I have way too much going for me here. I was like, and I finally realized that I didn't want to be a teacher. So, I was like, I'm gonna stay here and continue doing theater, continue doing residence life because I love it and I'm working my way up.

Mike Hoffman 07:13

Yeah. It's amazing to me what people can do with Theater majors because I came across a professional youth minister a long time ago. Anyway, she was a really dynamic speaker at one of our conferences, and I asked her afterward, I said, "Well, what did you major in?", you know, just out of curiosity, and she said, "Theater."

Kinsey Collins 07:31

That's like Brian White. He's a professor here.

Mike Hoffman 07:33

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Kinsey Collins 07:34

He has a theater degree. He can do a lot.

Mike Hoffman 07:38

Yeah. Molly, what about you?

Molly Sharp 07:40

So, I really didn't know a whole lot about Graceland before high school even. I had heard about it, because my aunt and uncle went here back in the 80s. And I was like, eh, it doesn't seem like my sort of place. I'm not even really going to consider it. And then I came up for Spec after my sophomore year of high school and I just met a [inaudible] that years Graceland reps, and I got to meet the cheer coach up here. And just a bunch of other really interesting people that were planning on being here. And it really was just, kind of like, something clicked into place. And it was like, oh, this is definitely, like, I could see myself living here and growing here and just becoming who I need to be at Graceland. And it was really kind of a uphill battle, because my family wanted me to go to school in Oklahoma, and stay in that, kind of, general area. But I really was, like, I want to go out of state. And if I can't go out of state, let's make a compromise. Let's have Graceland be our compromise. You trust the campus up there. You know the campus. You know several people up there. I'll be safe. There'll be plenty of people to take care of me. And that was kind of our compromise. And I'm just really glad that I'm here now. It's been a wonderful experience.

Mike Hoffman 08:50

That's great, great. Santana?

Santina Hernandez 08:54

Well, I didn't know much, like, about Graceland until, like, Molly said, until I came to Spec. And I came my sophomore year as well. And I just, like, I really liked how the campus was. It just gave off the energy that I really enjoyed. And I applied for schools that were out there, like Kansas and stuff like that, but I didn't, and I visited them, but I just didn't seem right. I didn't like how at those universities it was more like a number. They didn't really care as much about the students. And also, like, I just got comfortable with the campus just because I was here for three years, like, for the summer. And after, like, coming here I was by myself and I didn't know any, I only knew one person. That was it, only one person. But because, like, the campus is just so diverse and everyone is welcoming, you like learn, you learn to get to know people very quickly.

Mike Hoffman 09:50

That's great. So, there's lots of things you could have done in the summer, I assume. I'm sure there was probably some pressure to get a normal job, is what I was going to say. But I'm not sure, I'm not sure normal jobs even exist in the pandemic right now. But so, what made you decide to become a Graceland summer rep. You know, I mean, was there something that intrigued any one of you or all of you? Yes, Santana?

Santina Hernandez 10:21

Yeah. So, I had an awesome Graceland rep my junior year, I think, of high school? Yeah, into my junior year. Her name was Sidney Scott. And she went to school here, obviously. But she was just amazing. And I loved what she was doing when she was at our camp, and just the energy she had, and she, likes, we still keep in contact and stuff like that. And she, like, I don't know, just like, the stories she was telling me and stuff like that from like her other camps, I just really enjoyed. And I wanted to do the same thing. And I think it's important to, like, help kids, especially if they're first generation, to realize that college is a choice for them. And so, I wanted to be able to go to camps and do that as well.

Mike Hoffman 11:03

Yeah, Molly, do you have...

Molly Sharp 11:05

So, similarly, I wanted to be a Graceland rep because I had such amazing Graceland reps when I would come up to Spec and when I go to senior high camp, but it wasn't really those that made me decide to be a Graceland rep, so much as I wanted to be someone who can just speak about how awesome Graceland is, and try to get more people here. Because when I was telling people, my senior year of high school, like, oh, I'm going to Graceland, like, where the question I would get most often, "Oh, in Memphis? Where Elvis lived?" No, not that Graceland. So...

Mike Hoffman 11:46

Sometimes I wanna push back and say, "No, the *original* Graceland."

Molly Sharp 11:50

Yes. And so, I just, kind of, wanted to help, kind of, build awareness for Graceland and getting to meet new people is something I'm always super big into. I love just being around other people, even if sometimes I'm a little shy at first. I think getting to meet new people and getting to learn about them is super fun and, like, interesting. So, yeah, that's why I did it.

Mike Hoffman 12:12

Great. Kinzie?

Kinsey Collins 12:14

Well, I grew up going to church camps every summer of my life. And so, I only really knew one campground and one group of people. So, I really wanted to be able to experience different camps and different ways of, because no camp is the same. And so, I really wanted to be able to travel around and just be able to be involved in different kind of atmospheres and see what those are like.

Mike Hoffman 12:39

Is it, is there, is there anything particularly, well, you've said some of this, so all of you don't want to respond to this, but is there anything in particular you're looking forward to during your summer? I mean...

Kinsey Collins 12:50

I'm excited to fly to Pennsylvania.

Mike Hoffman 12:52

All right. Because you're going to camp there. And you know, the other thing is, I know, I talked to your coordinator before you came here this morning. I know that part of the, part of your assignments this summer are actually virtual camps and part of them are in-person camps. So, you're going to Pennsylvania. Are you, do have a an in-person, Molly?

Molly Sharp 13:16

I do have an in-person camp. I'll be going to Lake Doniphan.

Kinsey Collins 13:20

Which is my home campground.

Mike Hoffman 13:21

Which is your home campground.

Kinsey Collins 13:21

Yeah, so, yup.

Mike Hoffman 13:20

And Santana. Do you have a...?

Santina Hernandez 13:24

Yeah, so technically, so we're, I have one with Chihowa, which is my home campground, but we're having it at Doniphan just 'cause, like, the Chihowa one wasn't, like, quite ready yet, like with the COVID protocols. And then my second one is Texas.

Mike Hoffman 13:38

Okay. So, you'll be, you'll actually get to experience in-person too, as well as virtual. So, that's really cool. Yeah, so, I don't know, you've described in some ways already your Graceland experience. Is there anything you'd add about Graceland, that could be part of your experience, or in addition to some of the things you've said already?

Kinsey Collins 14:03

I would say my Graceland experience has been amazing, because I feel like here you get a lot closer with your professors, rather than you would at a big university. So, I'm really close with the professors who are with my major, my theater professor and choir. And I'm just so comfortable going to them for anything. It doesn't have to be specific to the class. But I feel like they're always going to be a part of my life even after I graduate from here. And just the people are amazing. Graceland does a really great job of hiring professors who care and want to see their students succeed, which I think is awesome. And Graceland is very unique in the sense you can do just about anything. Like, I know I have friends

who wanted to do softball and theater for a bigger campus. You can't do it. You have to pick. But Graceland is really good at letting you do just about anything you want. I think it's great.

Mike Hoffman 15:03

Anybody else?

Santina Hernandez 15:04

It's just I feel like it's just very caring with the students and professors like, you get to meet so many different people and make memories that you wouldn't think you would make 10 years beforehand. And just making your own fun. Like, there isn't much to do in Lamoni. It's just, like, make, whether it's not COSA events, like if there's no COSA events going on, you're making your own fun, whether it be with your house, or just like random people you see at the Swarm. Like, I know, just this past year, me and, like, some of the girls in our house, and like some of the boys in our brother house, we were just in the Swarm playing among us on our phones, and we stayed up till, like, 2am. And it was amazing.

Mike Hoffman 15:45

Alright, Molly, is there anything about your, about Graceland experience?

Molly Sharp 15:49

Yeah, I mean, both of them kind of covered it already. Generally, the people and the professors are some of my favorite parts about being here at Graceland. All of the English professors that I've met have just been super caring and want me to do well. And if I'm struggling, even if it's not necessarily with their class, if it's just like, "I need help figuring out how to do this thing." Any one of them is like, "Okay, come by my office, and we'll talk it out. We will figure it out." And I think that's super nice that they not only know my name and my face, but they care enough to be like, "Yeah, we'll figure it out. And I'll help you in any way I can." And then, I guess, yeah, just kind of making your own memories with all your friends. So, like this past winter me and well, maybe it was two winters ago, we built, like, a seven foot tall snowman in front of the chapel on campus, because there was enough snow and we were just like, yeah, we just wanted to. So, it was very much just like a, it's a, like a children's activity. We're children at heart. And this is how we're gonna, this is how we're going to build our seven foot tall snowman. And he's going to be great.

Mike Hoffman 17:01

Yeah, that's cool. That's very cool. So, what do you plan to do after you graduate as you're all in your last year, or going into your last year? So, do you have things you want to do? Or know you're going to do? Or? Maybe not yet? Santina, it scares you?

Santina Hernandez 17:19

Yeah, uh huh. I'm pretty sure I'm gonna go get my masters afterwards.

Mike Hoffman 17:24

Okay.

Santina Hernandez 17:25

But I just don't know quite yet. I still...

Mike Hoffman 17:28

Still thinking about it.

Santina Hernandez 17:29

Yeah, and I need to do some research and stuff like that. But, it's scary.

Mike Hoffman 17:33

Yeah. Well, I won't tell you it's not scary. Like, well, I could tell you stories. But yeah. So yeah, so, Molly, do you?

Molly Sharp 17:41

Um, so I'm currently planning on going back home for a little bit, and maybe taking a couple years off from school and potentially going to get my masters and my doctorate in English. And then...

Mike Hoffman 17:53

And come back to Graceland and teach?

Molly Sharp 17:55

Maybe. I've thought about it. But I'm kind of leaning towards being, like, an editor at a publishing company or being a writer. But because those are such big parts of my life that, I do it the most every day.

Mike Hoffman 18:08

Yeah. Very good. Kinzie?

Kinsey Collins 18:11

Yeah, I'm looking to go get my MFA after I graduate from here. And I'm really excited. And I think I would love to maybe go and do that in Chicago, because it's my favorite place ever. And I think it'd just be so fun to be able to live there for two years and see how I like it. And, yeah, I get my MFA in Acting, Theater. And with that I could be a college professor if I wanted to, but I'm going to try to act for me and make it so, that's my plan.

Mike Hoffman 18:44

Yeah, very good, great. So, this is an opportunity, you know, to speak to members of the church. And I've added a question here, like, what hopes do you have for Community of Christ in the future? And is there, I'll add part of that, like, what hopes do you have? And then, is there anything that you would like to tell or express to the leaders of Community of Christ about the future of the church? I mean, is there you know, do you have hopes?

Kinsey Collins 19:12

When looking at this question I just think how welcoming and how open Community of Christ has always been to any group of people growing up, and all that stuff. And I just really love that because you don't see that from a lot of other groups. And I just hope they just continue to be open minded and welcoming to all people, no matter who they are, or what their background is, because we all deserve to be able to go to a place where we feel welcomed and safe. And I've felt really blessed to be able to grow up in a Community of Christ church that has been like that.

Mike Hoffman 19:49

Thanks, Molly, any thoughts?

Molly Sharp 19:53

So, I just really love to see the church get bigger and get more active participants, because I know, at least in my congregation, all of our young people are super involved. And I know that not all churches, and not all congregations are like that. So, I would love to see, like, more youth involvement. And even if it's just something as simple as they're the ones passing the collection plate around. And so, I really like how they let us do those sort of things, and let us, you know, "Hey, I've got an idea for a devotion we could do for Sunday school", or "Can I maybe teach a class? Like, I've got this vision in my head, and I want to express that." And they're so open about letting us do that. And I really enjoy that so much about Community of Christ.

Mike Hoffman 20:40

That's very cool. Very cool. Santana?

Santina Hernandez 20:43

I think mine's like a mixture of both of theirs. I hope it does stay more open minded, because it is really welcoming. I was originally raised Catholic and so, I wasn't born, like raised in Community of Christ. I got invited to a camp, actually. And then after that, the youth pastor at that camp was like, "Oh, you should come to Bethel. And so, I went. Me and my mom went and it, the church, just, we connected with it more, and it was more towards our beliefs then it was when we went to our Catholic church. And so, then we converted. Me and my mom both got baptized. We're the only ones in our family that's Community of Christ. But and what I loved the most was how welcoming they were. They didn't care that like, we still believe in some of our Catholic beliefs, and they're just very open and caring. And another thing that I hope is that we do continue to get bigger and also, with our doing more of the outreach that they do. I know like our church, like, when it comes, like, closer to holidays, or in the summer, we raise money to send to, like, different countries, so they can get wells and animals and stuff like that. And so, I just hope that we continue to do the outreach that we do.

Mike Hoffman 21:55

That's great, great. So, is there anything else you'd want to share about yourself? Graceland? The future?

Kinsey Collins 22:03

The future is scary to think about.

Mike Hoffman 22:06

You know what? I remember being in your shoes. I remember graduating. Well, I remember graduating from college, and then waking up thinking, oh, I've skipped a class. I'm all done with this. Or, did I actually get my degree?

Kinsey Collins 22:22

Did that actually happen?

Mike Hoffman 22:23

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Kinsey Collins 22:24

I love my theater professor, Clark Presser, because they have so many connections and they can help us go down a path. So, like, in January, I'm going to this Catalpa audition for a bunch of different MFA programs around the US, and I, like, wouldn't know that if it wasn't for Tracy Salter. Or, yeah, they just have so many connections, and they want to see you succeed. They want you to do what you love to do. And they, love them.

Mike Hoffman 22:59

I do know. I mean, I have been impressed with my colleagues here on the academic side that have so many connections with things and I could, well, we could name names and go into detail but, yeah...

Kinsey Collins 23:10

And like, Sarah Blessing, one of the most amazing women I've ever met, and I was like, she could, she's so talented, just got her doctorate. She could be anywhere and she chose Graceland. So, it's cool how someone as talented as her sees potential in a small school like Graceland and wants to help it grow. And just amazing.

Mike Hoffman 23:31

Yeah, yeah. Molly? Santi?

Molly Sharp 23:34

I don't really have anything. I think Kinsey covered it pretty well. Like it's so amazing the things that our professors and literally any staff on campus can help us do if they really want us to succeed. And they do. They really, truly want us to be the best people that we can.

Mike Hoffman 23:53

All right. Well, I look forward to, I look forward to your summer and hearing about your stories about how your camps go and that kind of thing. I wish you all well, because that should be a, should be a new big adventure for you guys. So, yeah, all right. All right.

Kinsey Collins 24:10

Well, thanks for having us.

Mike Hoffman 24:11

Hey, thank you.

Josh Mangelson 24:20

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