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Project Zion Podcast

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

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Hello, everyone, welcome to another episode of *Project Zion Podcast*. This is Brittany Mangelson, and I'm going to be your host for today, and today we are bringing you another episode in our "What's Brewing" series, which is all about mission. So, how is Community of Christ, Community of Christ ministers and members, how are we living mission in the world? So, today, I'm really excited to have on Emily Penrose-McLaughlin, who is the Executive Director of HealthEd Connect. So, I'm going to have her share a little bit about that, but first, I want her to just introduce herself to our listeners, because this is the first time she's been on the podcast. So, welcome, Emily. Why don't you share a little bit about yourself?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 01:17

Yeah, well, thank you very much for inviting me and welcoming me into this time of sharing and fellowship together in community. And yes, as Brittany has shared, I serve as the Executive Director for HealthEd Connect, and I'm so grateful and honored to have this opportunity to serve in this way. I do consider this role part of my ministry and service in the world. I am a minister of Community of Christ. I serve in the office of elder and so, I think a big part of my "why" is, you know, living out my discipleship in service to others in this way. So, I feel really fortunate to be able to share in my own career journey in this way, in a way that is able to serve others and to be able to share that with all of you today, as well.

Brittany Mangelson 02:16

Awesome. I am so excited about this. So, Emily, can you give us a brief overview of what brought you to work with HealthEd Connect? I know you've been a minister and an employee with Community of Christ, but I'm just curious a little bit about your background with nonprofit and just what brought you to HealthEd Connect?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 02:36

Yeah, well, a lot of experiences culminated into my journey to HealthEd Connect, and when I look back, I'm really so thankful for each one that helped me learn and grow in a direction that would help me to serve the mission of HealthEd Connect more effectively. And so, just to provide, I guess, a really brief background, I want to highlight my experience serving as a World Service Corps volunteer with Community of Christ in Zambia as really integral to, kind of, the, almost the start of this journey, to circle back to this to this place of serving HealthEd Connect. So, my husband, Jeff, and I served, and, as World Service Corps volunteers, and we lived in Chingola, Zambia for one year, and we grew so close to our community there. And we served as youth ministers, and we lead recreation at a local elementary school and taught church basic beliefs classes, thanks to church training resources for that, and facilitated English lessons with a group of women. And I really enjoyed most, the opportunities to work with women and children and felt such joy in seeing their excitement and pride in themselves in

learning something new. And I realized it was important to me to serve a purpose that would uplift and empower others. So, from that point, it led me on a journey of exploration and being in professional roles over time that did allow me to gain some skills that would serve in a nonprofit more effectively. And I went to graduate school for Public Policy and Management with an emphasis in nonprofits to give me a little bit more skills that would help the heart side of me to put, just, the skills together, to be able to serve more effectively. So, I feel really, really grateful that I get to do this work with HealthEd Connect, and I really do feel that this is part of my discipleship and ministry.

Brittany Mangelson 05:02

It sounds like you've really found your calling, and have taken your experiences and have put them together, and live your life and ministry in your career and your vocation really, to help others around you. So, thank you for sharing that. That's really awesome. So, let's talk a little bit about HealthEd Connect. I know that it's somehow associated with Community of Christ, but I'm not really sure how. So, what can you tell us about the history and how it's connected to Community of Christ?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 05:33

Yeah, well, HealthEd Connect is a nonprofit organization. We are 12 years young. We were co-founded in 2009 by Jack and Sherry Kirkpatrick. And some may know, who are listening, Jack served as an apostle for Community of Christ for many years, and part of his mission field was Africa at one point, and Asia at another point. And Sherry also is trained as a professional nurse. So, she has her PhD in nursing and has experience in international health as well and training in that regard. And so, in their travels together, both Jack's in ministry with Community of Christ, and Sherry traveling alongside him on many of those times, to train volunteer community health workers in rural areas to provide basic health training and education, so that they can meet the most critical needs in their communities. And so, she had been doing that for a number of years over time when they were traveling. And it, kind of, all culminated together in 2009 when they were meeting with the health workers who were, they were already friends with, and volunteers with, and the realization that there was this need to, kind of, connect health and education in the communities. And I'll go into that in a little bit more depth, but basically, they decided then that they would utilize their time and skills and services. Jack and Sherry, all of their training in life, was like a, was like practice to go into this opportunity to start this nonprofit HealthEd Connect. And so, they established that in 2009. And we are, we're just amazed at how the leadership and development of our colleagues has grown over time, and how the programs continue to deepen and expand in ways that are serving the communities where we are located.

Brittany Mangelson 07:56

Thank you for making that connection. I knew that there was some connection to Community of Christ, but I wasn't sure if it was an official affiliate, or if it was sponsored by, or how that all worked. But to know that it was started by an apostle and his wife, and, just, it sounds like a natural extension of what they were already doing, and using their training outside of church ministry, but then also pairing it with church ministry, just, it feels like it was just this, like, obvious next step for their ministry, which has real life implication that's just really impactful. So, that's a really interesting and awesome story about how it was founded. So, thank you. So, Emily, can you tell me a little bit more about HealthEd Connect and maybe the structure of it? I'm curious about what countries you're in and the programs and services that you provide, just any information about HealthEd Connect?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 08:55

Yeah, yeah. So, HealthEd Connect is a nonprofit organization, and our mission is to empower women and children through evidence-based health education and advocacy. We partner with 150 volunteer community health workers, 98% percent of whom are women. And they're serving in 56 communities in four countries: Zambia, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal. And we provide training so that they can offer basic village primary care, based on World Health Organization guidelines, and the health workers focus on the most pressing needs in their communities. So, their services may be a little different from place to place, but their central unifying mission is to uplift and empower the most vulnerable, and for us that's women and children. And they weigh and monitor children from birth to age five to make sure they're growing and developing well. They offer prenatal monitoring. They teach about nutrition, sanitation, family planning, the importance of immunizations and how to administer first aid, among others. Some have also been trained in how to safely deliver babies in the rural setting. So, it's really, the skills that they're providing are really important. They're also trained on how to conduct participatory research through a simple needs assessment in their village by asking two primary questions. The first is: what is the most dangerous threat to your child's health? And the second is: what is the most dangerous threat to your health? And it was based on this assessment in Zambia that health workers in three communities found that families identified lack of access to education as the most critical threat to the health of children. So, in Zambia, one in 10 people are orphans, largely due to AIDS, tuberculosis and other health issues that go untreated. And the orphans left in the wake of this crisis are often cared for by elderly grandparents, aunts or uncles, or sometimes no one at all. And a child becomes the head of a household to try to care for themselves and their family and their siblings. So, they have no way of paying fees to attend school because even the public schools require fees, or, and uniforms and books that they have to pay for. So, the health workers called community meetings to discuss the findings from their assessments, and the caregivers said, "You know, we might be hungry tomorrow, but if our children cannot attend school, they will have no future." And so, starting small as one room school houses which were based out of Community of Christ congregations in these three communities, the health workers themselves volunteered to teach early childhood education to children who had never gone to school before. And, oh my gosh, these kids were so excited. Now, I need to give extra props to the health worker teachers because there were children of various ages in this group, not only those who might be deemed early childhood, because again, most had never gone to school before, and so, they needed to start at the beginning, with the basics. But since then, thanks to advocacy of the health workers and the help of HealthEd Connect supporters, these one-room schools have grown right along with the happy kids attending them, and they have become good quality community schools for grades K through 7, with trained teachers, still operating with the purpose of providing access to education for orphans and vulnerable children. And the schools offer nourishment of mind and body for the kids, because, you know, shortage of food is a really, very real concern in the places where we serve. And the children at our schools receive a hot meal every school day. There are also now other wraparound supports for the students such as a grief support program for orphans, a girls achievement program that we like to call "GAP" or "Mind the Gap" to discuss important developmental topics that are geared for girls, recreational sports, choir and other clubs. And again, through HealthEd Connect supporters, we were able to develop high school scholarship opportunities, mostly for girls, among graduates of our 7th grade primary schools. So, it's just really amazing to see this transformation over time. And one of the stories that I'm really eager to share with you is to

illustrate the impact of our health workers in the school programs. And that's of two girls who recently graduated high school, thanks to this scholarship. Carol Chisenga and Everlyn Kase were among the first GAP scholars in our first high school graduating class in 2020. Both were orphans, being raised by extended family members who could not afford to send them to school, but they learned from the health workers who visited that they could go to school for free at our Young Peacemakers Community School in Mapalo, Zambia. They participated in the grief support group and the Girls Achievement Program, both led by the health workers, and they were good students. When they were nearing the end of 7th grade, they learned about an opportunity to apply for a scholarship that could support them through high school, and again, they studied well and supported one and another. And we celebrated with them when they graduated high school. But their educational goals didn't end there. This year they applied for our Professional Nurses Scholarship, and both were accepted to begin a nursing diploma program. I mean, I can just, I was like dancing when I saw their application come in. I was just giddy with overwhelming gratitude and joy, because we really, kind of, feel like proud parents to witness their journey. Carol and Everlyn, both orphans with an uncertain future, were able to attend school, thanks to the advocacy of the health workers and the supportive HealthEd Connect, and now they will become professional nurses thanks to a scholarship provided by HealthEd Connect. So, the impact of this continued education will be life changing for these young women, both individually, and for their families, and the community at large. Because girls who attend high school are actually six times less likely to marry under age as children, and women's earnings will increase by 10%, with each additional year of schooling. So, these are just a few of the good reasons why we support scholarships, but especially for girls. Empowering opportunities for aspiring young women like Carol and Everlyn are possible because of supporters who want to uplift others through health and education, and that many of us take for granted. So, I feel hopeful and grateful every day when I think about the lives that are impacted and the people we serve with who are creating change.

Brittany Mangelson 16:21

Absolutely. As you were telling that story, it just made me think of my own two daughters who are growing up with such immense privilege, and there's no question about whether they can or will go to school. You know, it's just a given here. And the fact that this program, HealthEd Connect, was able to connect them with programming and schooling and scholarships and the opportunity to not only continue their education beyond, I think you said seventh grade, but then through high school, and then continuing education, and the fact that now they're going to be, becoming nurses and health care providers and workers, and I'm assuming just feed into the system, again, that is going to continue to help empower other girls and women, is just so inspiring. And, yeah, just really struck by how much we obviously take for granted here in the States and in the western world, where the question of going to school and getting an education is not something that we have to wrestle with every day. So, thank you so much for sharing that. And I'm also really struck by the holistic view that it seems like HealthEd Connect has that, you know, it's not just one path to success, that it's a health care thing, you know, immunizations, maternal health care, helping children get food in their bellies, and connecting them with adults that can raise them and just all of these different ways that communities are being supported. It seems like a lot. I mean, it is a lot. So, yeah.

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 18:05

Well, thanks. Yeah, I mean, it is. It's a, it's amazing. And it's just really, just so profound, I think, to be able to witness the cycle of empowerment, and just the ripple effect that it has on people's lives, you know, with each opportunity to create change. You know, it's not wasted. It is not wasted on these kids that have this chance.

Brittany Mangelson 18:29

Yeah, yeah, 'cause you're with them from the time that they're in their mother's womb, all the way up through the end of their education and continuing to support them. So, yeah, just, it seems like you all are there with folks at every step of the way. And I'm just, I really admire that. That's really awesome.

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 18:50

Yeah, thanks.

Brittany Mangelson 18:52

So, Emily, it seems obvious to me at this point, but I just want to name it and highlight it. How does the mission of HealthEd Connect specifically align with our Enduring Principles and Mission Initiatives. Knowing that the founders are members of Community of Christ, knowing that you are a member of Community of Christ, it seems pretty clear that our value system and the way that we live out Christ's mission is infused at every step of the way, but what are the ways that you see our Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles specifically lived out?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 19:27

Yeah, well, I see really beautiful alignment between the mission of HealthEd Connect and the church's Enduring Principles and Mission Initiatives, and Abolish Poverty, and End Suffering is the one that I really want to talk about first and foremost, because people in all of the areas where we serve do face significant hardships due to lack of access to resources, including healthcare, and food, and education, and jobs. And the health workers trained by HealthEd Connect are compassionate and they become equipped with basic health knowledge to help those who are hurting, and they're empowered to advocate for their communities. So, they are really empowered to empower others, and that creates this beautiful chain reaction, which then leads me, really, to the Worth of All Persons, and All are Called, because the health workers who we team up with are volunteers who have a compassion for others, but they didn't have any special training before we met them. In fact, many of them never had the opportunity to complete secondary school or some even primary school. And so, the only prerequisite they had to become health workers was a heart for service, and they see a need and they say, "Here I am. How can I help?" They are called, and they see the inestimable worth of the children, women, and all of the people in their communities. And I often think of that song, "I the Lord of Sea and Sky", "...Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart." When the health workers take on a new client, they say they "adopt" that person. And that's not something that we told them to say, that is the term that they use. And every time I hear them say it, it just touches my heart, because they choose to uplift and support the cares and concerns of someone else who they might not even know to begin with, but now call their own. And when I've had the opportunity to visit clients' homes with the health workers, I have witnessed their compassion, as well as the expression of comfort and relief on the faces of their clients when they come to visit. And they receive them as family. So, the teachers at our school are also among the most

inspiring people that I know because they are true advocates for the children as well. And so, I want to give them props. We talk a lot about our health workers because they are our foundation. Some people say they're our secret sauce, you know. It's just everything we do, kind of, revolves around the health workers. But at the schools, also many of the teachers at our schools, they themselves were orphans. So, they are keenly aware of the difficulties faced by many of the students in their classrooms. And they create the kind of environment that is safe and nurturing and uplifting, and the school is their family. So, in all the places where we have programs, we hear life stories of hardship, but we also hear many stories turn hopeful and bright, because a health worker has intervened. And each of the health worker represents the hands and the feet of Jesus embodying the cares and concerns of actions of the Great Teacher and the Healer and the Advocate and the Friend to the individuals and communities they serve.

Brittany Mangelson 23:14

Emily, I am so struck. You have used the word empowerment multiple times, and I think I probably have too, because that's what I'm the most struck by. This is a revolving ministry. Like you said, there's teachers, there's healthcare providers. This is a multi-pronged way to transform communities. And the way that we live out Christ's mission and inviting people to Christ, inviting people to be part of that holistic restoration, reconciliation, I really see that happening with HealthEd Connect. So, can you tell me a little bit about what this is actually doing to the local communities? I think you've touched on it a bit, but are you seeing the transformation that it seems like you would be seeing because you are empowering, HealthEd Connect is empowering people to take their community into their own hands? Like, that's what it sounds like is happening. So, are you seeing that as well?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 24:17

Yeah, we are grassroots led and evidence based, so it's really important that our direction comes from the local leaders, the ones who are working in the field to empower others, who are empowering women and children right there in their communities. And when I mentioned earlier that health workers are trained in how to conduct assessments or participatory research through needs assessment in their village, there's a lot of advantages to this approach. And it's, those things are that the health workers develop ownership of the project. It established the health workers role in the village and makes them the authority in their own village, versus an outsider coming in, and they identify the most critical health needs. So, we see an incredible individual transformation of the health workers themselves as they become empowered to empower others. And HealthEd Connect provides them with some training to, sometimes they would say, "Oh, we have the passion. We just don't know how to package it." And so, it just helped to give them those skills to be able to serve more effectively, both the health workers and the teachers, and therefore the communities are transformed through their efforts. And I can personally say, having seen the communities in Zambia where we now have schools, when I served as a World Service Corps volunteer in 2006 and '07, I visited these communities, and I saw them before there were schools there. And having then the opportunity to visit a decade later, when the schools are there, and they're in operational and they are run by the community themselves, I just want to say, you know, HealthEd Connect does not own these schools. They are community owned and operated. HealthEd Connect provides support, but they are run by and governed by a local school board which is made up of the teachers and community members and a member of the Kafwa, the health worker team. Usually, there's also a minister of Community of Christ, because our schools sit right next to each of the

Community of Christ congregations in these communities. They actually sit on church land. So, it's kind of a shared ministry, in many ways. So, I have seen the difference in these communities from the time that there was no school here, to now seeing children who were previously roaming the streets aimlessly, now walking to school with pride every day, as they go to school and the community really rallying around them in support, and the community feeling, you know, pride and holistically healthier as a result of the engagement of the health workers in their midst. You know, that it's, I just, kind of, think about, when I think about the health workers sometimes, I think about this, like, family tree that is, like, nearly infinite, and that has limbs that are always growing, and roots that are always deepening, and that just always seem to just stretch out to embrace the community and the needs that they see and that are always welcoming another, more people in, into the family that enjoy the benefits of being under the shade of this tree, that are able to eat the fruits of the tree. And it's something that, kind of, is this visualization to me, as I think about all of the people that they impact. And it just, kind of, ripples out in multiple ways, in all of the communities where health workers are serving. That could be, for example, in DR Congo, where many of the health workers are delivering babies, and so they're delivering babies now safely and have so many fewer maternal deaths because of their training and abilities. And in Malawi, they're really monitoring to make sure that children are staying on track with their health and development because there's such a problem there with stunting due to malnutrition. And in Nepal, they're working a lot on sanitation issues, because that's such a critical issue that sometimes we just don't even think about when we have the ability to have a flushing toilet in our own home and running water, but to take on sanitation issues and educate the community about the importance and the critical need for that in communities so that the whole community can be healthy. It's just, it just is amazing to think about that impact on a large scale as you're looking at the communities and the transformation that they've seen over the years.

Brittany Mangelson 29:43

Well, and I love that, like you've said, it's local people that are doing this. It's local people that are figuring out what are the most pressing issues. It's the local people that are in the community, talking with people, figuring out where the greatest needs are and then making the decision about where they're going to be and what they're going to focus on, etc. So, how has COVID impacted the work of HealthEd Connect and the communities that it serves?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 30:12

Yeah, well, what, when COVID first became part of our daily conversation, it was really, I think none of us could have anticipated, right, how long this would last. But from the very beginning, when we first began to notice, okay, this is spreading, Sherry, in her health knowledge and education and with other members of our Board who are also trained in professionally, in medical practitioners, shared resources with our health workers, about how to prevent the spread of COVID. And, so that they can not only protect themselves, but also be able to share that awareness with their communities, because they are highly respected in their communities. They're looked to for advice and knowledge about how to stay safe and how to stay healthy. So, equipping them with the credible information, you know, the information that was coming out from the CDC, and the WHO, and things that were just evidence-based information was critical to get into their hands as quickly as possible, so that they could, you know, provide the training, but also then, the resources. We did campaign to raise money for soap. I mean, we, things that we often just, again, just take adv-, take for granted, but that many people don't

even have the funds to buy soap, and just you know how to do the proper hand washing skills. And they would stand at a distance, the health workers, outside of someone's home and just, kind of, go around and show them, you know, how to wash their hands properly, how, you know, to. They started making reusable masks at many of our health worker centers, or places where they meet. They have a sewing machine, which initially we had provided for income generating projects, but that quickly pivoted into how to sew reusable masks so that the community could stay healthy. And they would sew masks for the children at the schools, as well, to make sure that they had at least two that they could wash and rotate on a daily basis. So, it definitely did, kind of, pivot the emphasis of the programs to address that most critical need. And now that kind of continues to be ongoing, that they continue to provide education about COVID prevention, but in addition to also doing all of the other health ministries and services that they were providing before, such as the weighing babies, and, you know, delivering children, that doesn't stop during COVID. So, you know, all of the things that they were doing before, but now, you know, that they're doing with that lens of how to stay healthy themselves, and how to keep the community healthy. But we are certainly, you know, advocating as much as possible that when the vaccine becomes available in their areas that they become vaccinated. And I will say that most of the health workers now have had that opportunity to be vaccinated and are strong advocates for it in their communities, which is so important, because, you know, misinformation is everywhere. And so, we, you know, it's out of their love for others that they really want to advocate for everyone to receive the benefit of preventing something that could potentially take their life. They want to help everyone in their community to be as safe and healthy as possible. And so, in the countries where we work, unfortunately, the vaccine availability is lagging behind what it is here in the US, but we are just continuing to advocate that, please, please, please, you know, do your part. They're already doing their part. They're doing their part in so many ways, by sharing the education about how to stay safe, but then being able to protect themselves and others too.

Brittany Mangelson 34:47

Thanks so much for that update. I have to say that the inequity of the vaccine availability is something that has actually kept me up at night over the course of this pandemic. And just knowing that, you know, in Community of Christ, we are a global church, but we are also very small. And so, knowing that we have real life friends in countries where the vaccine is not available, or it's not readily available, is something that I have really, really wrestled with, again, this deep, deep privilege that we have and seen the misinformation and knowing that that is getting to every corner of the world and just being so heartbroken. I mean, there's a lot of words I could use, but heartbroken about it. So, I'm really glad that the relationships and the work and the ministry have already been well established with HealthEd Connect and that there is this pipeline of trusted, medical, evidence-based information that can come through, like you said, the CDC, the World Health Organization, and then through the health care workers and teachers, and then into the communities, and what a blessing it is to just have, like you said, a, sewing machines that were going to be used for other projects, and then they were able to quickly pivot, because again, seeing the pressing need, and just being able to respond like that. That's really good stuff. And thank you. Thank you for that update.

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 36:20

Yeah.

Brittany Mangelson 36:22

So, Emily, I'm curious to know, as I brought up a couple times, you know, we live in the western world. We live in a completely different context than the places that HealthEd Connect is serving, but what are the ways that you have seen your local context impacted by it? Has your, have your views on mission in your local area changed? How has it changed the way that you are a parent and a minister in your local congregation and area?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 36:56

Yeah, well, um, I think, you know, that my opportunity to serve with HealthEd Connect, just, it just helps me to remember every day, that we have a choice in how we live, and that these choices impact the world around us, in many ways, bigger, big and small. And it's important for us to remember that even in the small things that we do, can make a really big impact in our family, and in our community, and in the world. And so, you know, I think, as you noted, Brittany, and being a parent yourself, as well, yeah, that part of my struggle at times is looking at my family, and my children, and the privilege that we do have, and trying to explain to them how they have the choice of making their mark in the world and the impact that they can make. And it's the material things that I have really the hardest part with. And so, for me, I try to just bring up questions that are, that help them think about the choices that they make, or the things that they want. And thinking about, not with the hope of making them feel guilty, but with making them think about their privilege, and the things that they could do that might be a different choice, or that might be more considerate of others around them. So, I think it's just, kind of, this opportunity to always think about the ways in which, that we are part of a global family. And that a choice that I make could have an impact on someone else. And that, that's really weighing at times, but it also is uplifting in other ways, because it makes us know that whatever is happening, we have the opportunity to be part of a change. We have a voice. We're lucky to have a voice really. And sometimes we need to be a voice for others. And so, that's really, when I just get overwhelmed with what is happening in the world, I really try to center myself on the fact that there are so many people who are trying to make it better, and that I can be one of those people too. And so, I think that that rests on all of us, right? That's, you know, that's in whatever way that we can be a positive impact in the world. Starting with ourselves, sometimes that means you just have to start with yourself and looking, you know, start the inward journey to the outward journey and see where it takes you, because there's so much blessing in that.

Brittany Mangelson 40:15

Well, that is a message that I needed to hear, so, thank you. It really can be so overwhelming. And we were just talking before we recorded just about the trickiness of being a parent during a pandemic, and then, you know, but that's still even feels, like, very centered on us in our own local context. And then you take one step out, and then one step out, and then one step out, and you're looking at the whole globe, and just knowing that we are helping shape the next generation of humans and leaders, world leaders, and it can just feel really overwhelming and the weight of privilege is strong and knowing, not knowing how to react as a parent, and how do you press on your kids the deep responsibility that comes with that, like you said, not to make them feel guilty, necessarily, or, but to be able to feel the gravity of that responsibility is something that is a struggle. So, I'm really grateful for the way that you

articulated that, and, again, just reminded me that everyone is trying to do this in their own context. And we're not the only ones that are working to make the world a more peaceful and equitable place. So, I'm right there in the trenches with you. That's what I'm trying to say,

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 41:36

I can't say that I'm great at it every day, but I just know that I just have to keep trying.

Brittany Mangelson 41:41

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Emily, this has been a really great conversation. And I do have a couple more questions that I usually will leave these interviews with. And one of them is just simply what are your hopes for Community of Christ? And what are your hopes for HealthEd Connect? I'll throw that in there as well. Being a minister and being the director of HealthEd Connect, what do you see in the future? Or what do you hope to see in the future?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 42:12

Yeah, well, you know, I think for Community of Christ, my hope is that we can continue to live into our calling, to be a faith movement that is centered on peace. And I think, you know, we have just such a beautiful, ongoing conversation with God. And it's just a really special opportunity that we have to not only individually, but collectively as a community, discern together. And so, I think that some of the, you know, for example, our Doctrine and Covenants provide such beautiful language and reflections for us to consider individually and collectively. And when I think about what the question that we are, that we are focusing on now, how do we move toward Jesus the peaceful one? I mean, isn't that just kind of the most, the most critical and needed question in our world, and our, in our individual lives, is, how are we moving in that direction? And so at times, I think that the journey can be scary because it's uncertain along the way, and things like a pandemic come and shake everything up and make us question different things, but it also allows us a clarity, to take a step back and, and look at our, our collective calling together. And so my, my hope is just to can continue to live into that, and to follow where that leads in with joy, with joy and holding hands together. And so that's, that's my hope for Community of Christ. And that's, that's what I hope for as we continue to reflect as well as to take action toward toward those causes. And for HealthEd Connect, my hopes are that we continue to deepen and expand our programs based on the needs identified locally as top priorities and carried out through local leadership. Being grassroots led and evidence based is an integral part of who we are, and we feel like we are deepening our roots in really healthy ways and seeing the fruits of these developments. The community health worker trainings are now happening through local leadership, which was always the vision to train the trainer's so that trainings could happen fully in their native language and context. Communities have appreciated the efforts and contributions of volunteer health workers so much that local Chiefs have donated land, to the health workers to develop with the support of health ed connect, so that they would have a designated center to conduct health education with mothers monitoring the weight and growth of infants and children. Leading orphan support programs and creating little libraries and literacy programs. We're growing our high school scholarships and academic support in Zambia. And we see our next big endeavor as developing VOTEC programs out of our three sister schools, so that young people learn the skills they need to market and sustain themselves into adulthood. All of these developments have been identified locally with evidence for the needs. So my hope is that we continue to follow our mission empowering women and children through health, education and

advocacy. We know that lives are being uplifted and cycles of positive change are happening, not just for now, but for generations to come.

Brittany Mangelson 47:02

I love what you just said, deepening rather than expanding. The imagery of that is just so powerful. And it reminds me of the story that you told earlier about the two women that had graduated and who are now going on to becoming healthcare workers themselves. And just this idea that the more that we can help people empower themselves, empower their local communities, that's just going to, what's the word I'm thinking of, reciprocate more, and more, and more, you know. And it's not necessarily, like, expanding on a surface level, but it's really educating and empowering people to be able to use their voice and skills and shape the world around them. So, yeah, I love, I love that imagery that you just shared. So, now I want to know if there are ways that our listeners can help get involved. Do you have a website you would like to share? Is there a place where people can donate or learn more? Just anything that would help us get more connected with the work that you all are doing?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 48:07

Yes, well, thanks for asking. Yes. Our website would be a great place to check out to learn more. And that website is healthedconnect.org. So, it looks like health, but it's healthed, one word, and connect.org. And we have a wonderful blog, also, that I would really encourage you to sign up for. It's a, we promise, it's a short, weekly, uplifting update. I promise that you will enjoy it. And it's always providing updates from our health workers, and schools, and some of the stories that they have to share that will just make you feel good. And so, I would encourage you to sign up if you are able and check out our website for more information about all of our programs and ways that you can contact us and get involved.

Brittany Mangelson 49:10

Awesome. Thanks so much. And we'll for sure put the link to that in our show notes. And I do not think that I am signed up for your blog, so I apologize for that, because now I'm going to. I'm gonna go sign up!

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 49:21

Great! Yes. I would love to have you on it.

Brittany Mangelson 49:25

For sure. Emily, thank you so much for being on today. Is there anything else? You've shared a lot so far, and I, my mind is just, like, buzzing a million miles a minute with the impact, the gravity of the impact that this organization is having. But do you have anything else that you would like to share with our listeners today?

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 49:46

I just want to say thank you. There's a lot more that I could share, so many stories of gratitude and impact. But I think that the most important thing is just the knowledge that the impact that is being made in the world is, it's brighter because of these women who are courageous advocates and who I respect so much, and really look to with so much respect and admiration. So, thank you for the opportunity to

be able to just share even just a tiny glimpse about their work and their stories and I appreciate that opportunity.

Brittany Mangelson 50:37

No, absolutely. I've learned a lot. I've been really inspired and the fact that you and your community of women are also empowering more and more women for generations to come, just gets me really excited. So, thank you so much for sharing these stories, and for all this information. And again, for our listeners, the link to the website will be in the show notes, where you can go learn more and get involved. So, thank you so much, Emily.

Emily Penrose-McLaughlin 51:06

Thank you so much.

Josh Mangelson 51:15

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