

**463 | Coffee In The Swarm | Conner Holben**  
Project Zion Podcast

**Josh Mangelson 00:17**

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

**Mike Hoffman 00:33**

Today on Coffee in the Swarm, a part of Project Zion Podcast, I have with me Connor Holden and we're coming from Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa. Connor, welcome to our, our program.

**Conner Holben 00:45**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Mike Hoffman 00:47**

Yeah. And we were just talking before this session started and, and time goes by so fast for me. I just, I blame it on my old age. But Connor, this is his third year here at Graceland and so, um, we'll just talk a little bit about that. Connor has been involved with campus ministries through the Afterglow program. And you've been coordinator for two, one year? (Yes.) Okay. So, that's how, that's basically how we know each other is through afterglow I guess, so.

**Conner Holben 01:14**

Yes. Pretty much (Yeah.) campus ministries, me being, um, a chaplain on campus now we've gotten to know each other (That's right.) quite well.

**Mike Hoffman 01:22**

Yeah. Yes, we have weekly meetings. Well, for most, for the most part anyway. (Yes.) So, so good. So, te, tell, tell me, tell us, our listeners a little bit about yourself. What's your major?

**Conner Holben 01:33**

Well, I'm a theater major and a music minor. I come from a very small town in southwest Iowa called Minden. And, um, I am on the Faunce House here at Graceland University, which is the best house in my opinion.

**Mike Hoffman 01:48**

So, just for those of you that didn't go to Graceland, like me, uh, we have a very unique house system here. And each of the houses has a unique name and colors and all kinds of things. So, so, and every, almost every person I've ever met that goes here as an undergraduate is very proud of their house.

**Conner Holben 02:06**

Yeah, no, no, the houses, the housing system really helps with community. Um, I would say a lot of people explain it. I actually worked on, uh, as a admissions ambassador for a little bit. And (When was that? Like that last year?) Yeah. It was (Okay.) last year. I worked for maybe a semester and then, uh, I got really good at it because, I mean, there's a lot to Graceland, even though it's so small and (Right.)

connected, but there's a lot to tell. And there's stories everywhere. But, um, every time I mentioned the housing system, I always mentioned ( . . . ), Have you seen Harry Potter? It's like that.

**Mike Hoffman 02:46**

Yeah. No, that's, that, uh, that's a good comparison for me. Yes. That's, that's, that's right. Yeah. Very good. Did you grow up watching Harry Potter?

**Conner Holben 02:55**

Oh, yeah. I love, I love Harry Potter. (Cool.) Now, no, um, I did not read the books. I will, I will be honest. Um,

**Mike Hoffman 03:03**

I didn't either. My wife did. (Oh, did she?) Yeah, yeah.

**Conner Holben 03:07**

Oh, uh, I think I've read the first one. And then ( . . . ), Oh, this is good. Then I forgot to read the rest. (Forgot.) So, I'll just focus on the movies.

**Mike Hoffman 03:16**

Well, that's alright. So, okay. So, Conner, tell me a little bit about how you came to Graceland. I mean, like, how did you? You're a member of the church, Community of Christ. (Yes.) So, did you always know about Graceland? Or did you expect to come to Graceland?

**Conner Holben 03:32**

I actually did not know about Graceland. But my family has a long line of people that have gone to Graceland. (Okay.) My, my grandpa actually, he, uh, this is a funny story. He, um, he started a rock bands on Graceland campus which wasn't very, um, oh, what's the word I'm looking for?

**Mike Hoffman 03:57**

Wasn't well received?

**Conner Holben 03:58**

Yeah. That's it. It wasn't well received back in his time. And, then, he also had a little problem with, uh, gambling outside of Graceland campus so he got kicked off campus actually. (Oh, my gosh. Okay.) And, uh, my grandpa, another one of my grandpas, was a, he worked in the Morden Center during SPEC. He, he (Really.). Yeah, yeah. (Okay, cool.) So, and then my dad actually went to SPEC in the 90s, (Okay.) so, he, he helped my grandpa out, but he didn't, like, go to SPEC, but he, like, kind of snuck in. (Sort of snuck in. Yeah, yeah. Well, that's cool.) But yeah, so yeah, they, I've now heard about my, the past time of Graceland through my dad and my grandpa. (Okay.) And it actually started because, I actually heard about Graceland when a former Graceland alumni, Dylan Pitt, he, uh, he became a high school English teacher at the high school that I was currently in which was Tri-Center, and, um, he was in, he was teaching my little brother. And, uh, when Dylan came, he was just, he, the energy was crazy. He was, he was such a great guy. (Yeah.) Um, I sa, I found out that he was from Graceland and I'm, like, that was a, that was one of the colleges that, uh, were looking at me. And he

told me a lot about it. And, then, he just, he actually, uh, spoke on my behalf for my signing, because I was going to play football here. I played (Okay.) for a season (Yeah.) and then I kind of dropped out, lost the passion, you know how it happens. (Yeah. It happens.) But, no, yeah, he, he spoke on my behalf at my signing and I, I really appreciated it, him for doing that. He actually, uh, pulled out his Graceland banner and, like, put it on the front of the podium. It was, it was really (That's cool.) cool. But no, yeah. So, uh, Dylan Pitt had a very big influence on me for coming to Graceland.

**Mike Hoffman 05:57**

Ah, that is so, that is so cool. (Yes.) Dylan was my first chaplain president (Was he really?) when I first got here. Yeah. (Oh, my gosh.) So, yeah, that would have been, I, I've lost track of what year that was. But, yeah, so he was in the first year I got here in 20, it would have been the summer, August of 2015. (Yeah.) He was the, uh, the chaplain president that year. (That's amazing.) So, that's cool.

**Conner Holben 06:20**

No, yeah, I, I remember. And he actually got me introduced to, uh, told me about his afterglow stories. (Yeah.) And I was like, Afterglow? What's that? (Yeah.) Sounds really cool. And he's like, Well, it's a bunch people getting together, coming to listen to music. And getting a little, um, getting a little, um, stress out of the way on Sundays right before Monday starts up again. And it's just a, a fun time where people come together and create music and have good memories and (Yeah.) just share stories and just become one with each other. And I, and I was like blown away. I'm like, they have that at a college? Like, that sounds like something I would really want to do. So, he, um, he told me that, Yeah, if you consider going to Graceland, they would, they would, I'm sure they would love to have you (Yeah.) audition. Because at that point, I was really looking forward to becoming a musician as I, uh, continued throughout my high school career, (Right.) And I, and I didn't want to stop that. So, I started off as a, a music major, but I realized that music wasn't the only thing I wanted to pursue. And I also wanted to pursue in acting as well. (Right.) So, that's where the Theater Department con, came hand in hand with the music because (Sure.) I was very involved in musical theater. I absolutely loved it because I did it in, um, my all, I made it to all-state speech in musical theater and that was just a really good time. I sang "Jesus Christ, Superstar's" "Gethsemane". (Oh, wow.) And that was a really tough point, uh, for my voice, but I, I felt like if I continued, I, I would get better. I knew the song would get better if I kept going. (Sure.) And it has throughout the years. I've noticed my progression every time I sing it now.

**Mike Hoffman 08:01**

You want to sing a little bit for us?

**Conner Holben 08:03**

Maybe not right now. I'm not warmed up or anything. (No, that's fair.) But, no, yeah, that's

**Mike Hoffman 08:07**

Oh, Jesus Christ Superstar was one of my favorites. I, uh, we actually sang it when I was in a high school (Did you really?) well, I, in choir. So, (Oh, that's cool.) yeah, we didn't actually perform it. But we did the music from it for the choir. (That's awesome.) So, yeah, so, it got me hooked back then, too. So, yeah, it's cool. Very cool. (Yeah.) So, you, you, you came and you played football for one season? (Yes.) Okay.

**Conner Holben 08:32**

And shot the season. I got, I got hurt a couple of times because (Got ya'.) of concussion. (Oh.) I had a few minor concussions and then I had a major concussion in high school. It kind of added all together. (Oh, yeah.) And I'm like, maybe I shouldn't play any more. Yeah.

**Mike Hoffman 08:44**

Yeah. Yeah. Well, we're, I'm certainly grateful that you found more time to spend in campus ministries and (Oh, yeah, absolutely.) Afterglow because. Now, I know, like, you're one of the two leaders for Afterglow this, uh, this year. (Yes.) But you also play in the band. I mean, what instruments do you play?

**Conner Holben 09:01**

Uh, I play acoustic guitar. Um, I've never been asked to play piano, but I, I would want (You actually.) to play piano. (You can, you can actually.) Yeah. Yeah. I can play a little bit (Really?) of piano. (Cool.) Yeah. (Okay.) It's kind of like just messing around with chords and stuff like that. (Yeah.) I mean, I'm not. I'm not like, I'm not a (Not a concert pianist.) ( . . . ) by any means. No, I'm not a concert pianist at all. But, no, I dabble. (Okay. Okay.) But, um, no, I'm also a singer for Afterglow as well. (Yeah.) Usually the lead singer. Um, if, if no one else sings, (Right.) then, then I choose to sing because I, I love music. And I feel um, that that should be shared with everybody. And if someone wants to do it, I would be glad to give that to them. And I really enjoy it.

**Mike Hoffman 09:45**

No, and I know there have been times when other people have sang either with you or instead of you sometimes (Yes, yes.) certain songs. (We always love collaborations like that.) Yeah. Absolutely.

**Conner Holben 09:54**

It's a really good time when people want to join in and allow, and allow, uh, their voice to be heard as well. (Yeah.) Not, not just through the music. Also through the prayers in there. And the messages that they always give. It's a, it's a really, really, um, um, uh, trying to think, interconnected, uh, thing Afterglow because it's just, it's, it's just, trying to put the words together. (That's fine. Yeah.) It's more of, um, experience, (Yeah.) I would say.

**Mike Hoffman 10:29**

Well, what I've appreciated this year, uh, is the, the way the music and the message and the prayers all sort of, like, on a given night, there's sort of a theme and they go really well together. I mean, you know, and sometimes, it's, I don't know, it's, um, sometimes that's difficult to do. I mean, when you try to, try to plan it, but you guys have done a really good job with doing that I think, (Yeah.) so,

**Conner Holben 10:55**

We, we try to do our best to stick with the theme (Yeah.) because, um, we think that's a good thing for the whole night, is (Yeah.) just to stay together. (Yeah.) And, uh, if it doesn't, um, usually we picked a song that a lot of people know and a lot of people will join in as a, (Yeah.) um, to form together and just, like, create a, uh, a moment where we all can just join in whenever we feel like it. (Yeah.) It's just, it's a

really fun time. I enjoy playing and singing and listening to everything that's going on. It's very, it's a very, uh, good feeling, knowing that people enjoy what you're doing, and, and you're giving back the same.

**Mike Hoffman 11:41**

So, let's talk a little bit about your theater experience. (Okay.) So, like, what, what are, like when you first got here, were you in a production, theater production right away? Or

**Conner Holben 11:52**

I actually was. Um, the, uh, spring production that they were putting on was "Chicago." (Oh, yeah. Okay.) And, um, coming in as a freshman, it was my first audition. Uh, I've, I've seen, and there were plays before, but I didn't really do (Did you do this in high school at all.) I did. I did a one, I did one musical (Okay.) because, um, our theater program wasn't really existing. (Okay.) So, uh, my

**Mike Hoffman 12:22**

So you had auditioned and you had gone through those processes before?

**Conner Holben 12:25**

Yes. Yes, (Okay.) I had. So, I, I'd done auditioning before (Okay.) and I know what it's like. There wasn't, like, too much experience behind that, (Yeah.) but when I got to college it was way different. (How was it different? I mean) Um, so during high school, um, we, our music program isn't the strongest rather than our sports program. (Okay.) The sports program gets handed, uh, quite a bit of funds. (Okay.) And, uh, the music program, especially the choir program, was kind of, um, kind of deteriorating a little bit, I would say. And it is, and it's unfortunate because we had, we had really talented people. But, uh, my music director one day decides that he's, he was talking to me and he says, Hey, I want to put on a musical. It, it doesn't have to be anything too big. But I really want to try this. And I'm like, Okay. I'm with you. Uh, I asked my dad, he was assistant director, he, because he's done directing before for, um, uh, in his time at West Harrison High School (Okay.), he, he did something like that. And, um, he got together because he knows a lot about theater because he, he was in a production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" actually (Oh, really.) in the 90s. And he did "The Music Man" and "Hello, Dolly," "No, No, Nanette," all those (Wow.) big ones. Yeah. No, he was very ( . . . )

**Mike Hoffman 13:44**

So, you have a legacy in this then.

**Conner Holben 13:46**

Pretty much. Yeah, I would say so. He definitely inspired me to become (Yeah.) more of a musical theater, uh, fanatic.

**Conner Holben 13:48**

So, so you, you got to Graceland and your very first show was Chicago then?

**Conner Holben 13:58**

Yes. My very first show was "Chicago." (What was that like?) Well, I played Billy Flynn, who was the, uh, snarky lawyer. (Mm hmm.) And, um, it was kind of hard putting myself into that position because I'm, um, at that time, it was a time where I really didn't feel comfortable in my skin yet (Okay.) at college. And I'm, like, do I want to act like this on stage?

**Mike Hoffman 14:22**

Well, in, in, in your first year, too. I mean, (Yeah.) so that's, yeah. So it's

**Conner Holben 14:27**

And, and it's a lead male role. (Right. Right.) And I and I had some big shoes to fill (Yeah.) for that role. And it, it was, it was definitely a great experience. I, I enjoyed it because I got to know, I had hea, heavy dialogue. I had quite a few songs to sing and I had costume changes and I'm like, This is, this is what I came to college for. (Yeah.) This is, this is what I've been imagining a theater program would be my whole life. (Yeah.) And when it all unfolded, it was magic. (That's cool.) It, it was just, wearing, wearing three piece suits makes you feel so good on stage even though you're sweating so bad. It makes you feel so nice knowing that, uh, that you made, um, such a good effort (Sure.) and just to present it on opening night was just. (Yeah.) The nerves were there, but as soon as you get out there and start having fun with the rest of the cast, and the crew helping out backstage, just everything comes together. And it's just, it's such a great opportunity. And I'm so blessed that I had, that I had a chance to be a part of it. (Yeah.) And continuing on as well.

**Mike Hoffman 15:39**

So what were you in next?

**Conner Holben 15:41**

Um, after that, I believe I was in "Legacy", which was the 10 years of Graceland, uh, musicals, (Okay.) which is the whole compilation of music that they put together from, uh, past years of Graceland productions. (Okay.) And, uh, I played Harold Hill in one of them from "The Music Man", (Yeah.) because we did, um, uh, "You Really Ought to Give Iowa a Try." And that was really fun because I did, I had no lines, but it was all filmed through a, uh, camera lens. So, like, um this was

**Mike Hoffman 16:18**

Was that during the COVID season?

**Conner Holben 16:20**

This was during the COVID, so we had to be very, very cautious. (Yeah.) But um, yeah, so I played Harold Hill. I played Cornelius from "Hello, Dolly." I sang a duet with, uh, Dora Marks. And that, that was a great time. I love, I love "Hello Dolly." (Yeah.) That's one of my favorite musicals. Uh, and I played, uh, Nicely from "Guys and Dolls." I got to sing, "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat." (My gosh.) Which, I love that song. (Yeah.) But, my gosh, how many times, uh, we went through it three takes. Whoa. Oh, I, I thought I was gonna' have to bring an extra shirt. I was dreched afterwards. It was, it was a time for sure.

**Mike Hoffman 16:59**

Now, I know "Chicago" was in the J R Theater, The Black Box (It was. Yes.) Theater. Was, where was this one filmed?

**Conner Holben 17:05**

"Legacy" was actually filmed in both the J R and the Graceland auditorium. (Okay.) So, we took the camera and, uh, placed it in different places, or it was, like, a moving camera (Okay.) and followed us more like, um, ( . . . ) (All right.) in a way s, because, uh, thanks to COVID, couldn't have people in the audience, (Right.) we decided to film it live for everybody to see. (Yrah.) So, that took place in, uh, in both settings of the auditorium and the J R Theater.

**Mike Hoffman 17:35**

So, what else have you been, I mean, what other theater productions have you been in?

**Conner Holben 17:40**

Um, recently, I have been in the homecoming production of "The Great American Trailer Park." (Oh, yes. Yes.) Which was a rowdy time for, for me because I played a character that was unlike me in so many ways. (What character did you play?) I played Duke. (Oh, yes.) Duke was a, uh, he's, uh, he's misunderstood. Let's say that. He, he, uh, he does, he does a few bad things, uh, throughout his day. And, um, I'm basically pursuing, uh, my ex-girlfriend who is in a certain profession that, um, allows her to, um, tryin' to think how to put this, uh, her profession kind of gives off, um, a bad, tryin' to figure out

**Mike Hoffman 18:36**

Let's see, her profession was she was a strip

**Conner Holben 18:38**

She was a stripper (tease artist?). Yeah, a striptease artist. Yes. Let's call her that. (Okay.) Definitely an artist. It does take, it takes, (Yeah.) right, to do that. And

**Mike Hoffman 18:49**

Now, just, just for those of you listening, we, she, she never stripped on stage.

**Conner Holben 18:53**

No, no. ( . . . ) She did not. No, there were no clothes coming on and off. I promise you.

**Mike Hoffman 18:57**

No, but there was, ( . . . ) that was a pretty interesting, interesting show. I remember. And that was, I mean, COVID was still going on, but I remember that's where the, we were social distanced and wearing masks as an audience.

**Conner Holben 19:08**

Yes. And we all had to be, uh, (Yeah.) we all had to make sure that we were, uh,

**Mike Hoffman 19:12**

Had you been vaccinated or tested or whatever? (Yes.) I don't know, uh, (Yes.) at that point.



**Conner Holben 19:17**

I think at that point, everybody was vaccinated and tested (Okay.) in the cast (Okay.) so, I think we were all right ( . . . ). (Yeah.) It was a pretty small cast granted, um, how big the production (Yeah.) was. But, um, it also helps with, uh, us being in one setting (Yeah.) ( . . . ) our time. It was in a trailer park.

**Mike Hoffman 19:35**

And I liked that, I didn't know what it was called, but I had some of the students that I know in the production or around the production actually, they told me about the fourth wall because there were tiles. (Oh, yes.) And when, well explain it. I mean, we're

**Conner Holben 19:50**

So the, so the fourth wall (Breaking the fourth wall?) Yeah. Breaking, breaking the fourth wall is basically when you're speaking directly to the audience. (Okay.) So, when it comes to the three main females, uh, uh, this will be an example, um, those three females are speaking directly to the audience. They're in, they're, but they're also included in the story. (Yeah.) So, then speaking to the audience is allowing them to get a better feel on that, Okay, you're part of this journey with us. You're going to watch this unfold, but we're still going to act. We're going, we're still going to be here as our characters, but as our characters we want you to watch.

**Mike Hoffman 20:31**

That's wild. (Yeah.) I remember the first time I ever saw that on television. It was in a show called "Moonlighting", which, (Oh.) I don't know, it, that, way before your time probably. But, but it was a show where the characters on television actually turned and talked to the audience (Oh, really?) like you were there. Yeah. And it, it was just

**Conner Holben 20:48**

I'm sure, I'm sure that was like, Whoa.

**Mike Hoffman 20:50**

Yeah. Well, I had never seen it done before. And I didn't even know the term for it until (Yes.) just recently, you know, when, well, just at last homecoming, so

**Conner Holben 20:58**

Yeah, no, but that show was, that show was pretty interesting. It was something I'd never played before, but I think, I think I did a pretty good job. And I think, uh, from direction that we took, I think, I think it went pretty well. There was actually one night where, um, all the electricity went out. It was actually the very last night. All the electricity went out and there's actually a part in the show where, um, one of the main, uh, female roles goes, Great. Now the power is back on. And it was like a little joke that because I actually almost broke character because when she said that I started laughing because the lights just came back on. (Yeah.) And I was like, (I was actually there for that.) Were you? Oh. (Yeah.) I was like, Oh my gosh, don't laugh. Don't laugh. (Yeah.) But, no, it was a great, it was a great experience. Once again, another great production. (Yeah.) I'm really glad I got to be a part of that one because this was a guest director as well.



**Mike Hoffman 21:54**

That's right. It was Todd Davison, right? (Who?) Todd?

**Conner Holben 21:58**

Yes. Todd. (Yeah.) It was Todd. (Todd.) Yeah, he's a great guy. (Yeah.) But he gave us good direction. And

**Mike Hoffman 22:03**

He, he was, he's been involved with Spectacular for a (Yes.) long time. ( . . . )

**Conner Holben 22:08**

That's actually one thing. I'm a COC member, never went to SPEC. (Oh, yeah. Okay.) Only, only because, uh, money was tight. (Yeah.) And, uh, I was kind of working my way through college. (Yeah. Okay.) Yeah. Or working my way up to college.

**Mike Hoffman 22:23**

Yeah, no, that's understandable. So, okay, so now we have to talk about at least the last, last performance that I know you did. So, the last production you've been in, just recently, recently, as we talked today, anyway, (Um Hmm.) was the Rocky Horror, I want to call it The Rocky Horror Picture Show. (Yeah.) But that's, is that

**Conner Holben 22:45**

That's what, I mean, the movie calls it that, "The (Yeah.) Rocky Horror Picture Show, (Right.) but it's call, it's (Just Rocky.) ( . . . ) just Rocky Horror Show. (Okay.) But, uh, I like picture show cause ( . . . ) it rings better. But the Rocky Horror Picture Show was the most recent one (Yeah.) and, oh, my goodness, it was a blast. (Good.) It was so much fun.

**Mike Hoffman 23:10**

It was fun to watch. I have to tell you that.

**Conner Holben 23:12**

I appreciate that. (Yeah.) It, it was, it was just

**Mike Hoffman 23:17**

Because the, the movie actually came out when I was, I want to say, when I was in high school or college. (Yeah. You know, in 75, I believe.) Oh, yeah. So, that would have been my high school. Yeah. So yeah.

**Conner Holben 23:27**

But, no, it's such a cult following. And the amount of people that showed up for us was just incredible. (You mean for the production here?) Yes. For every production, we were sold out ( . . . ) every show. And it was, it was a great feeling. It was that, that energy was definitely amped up, (Yeah.) especially the 10:30 Friday night. (Oh, yeah. I did not go to that one.) No, oh, my gosh, there were things getting

thrown around left and right. And there were people yelling stuff. And (That's the one where it was interactive?) Yes. Yes. The audience was actually interacting with the, uh,

**Mike Hoffman 24:00**

How did, how did that happen? Like, did you have like special instructions for the audience? Or, (Um, so) was it based on the tradition?

**Conner Holben 24:07**

It's based on the tradition,

**Mike Hoffman 24:08**

Which I remember, I remember going to it and you took extra props with you into (Yeah.) the movie theater. (Yep.) So, is that what they did then?

**Conner Holben 24:16**

Um, I don't know if they did that. But, (Okay.) but I know they did the yelling out (Yeah.) as part (Gotcha.) for certain, uh, important dialogue. (Right.) So, when my, my dad was actually in the audience, he was, he was reading a couple of them. I could hear his voice backstage I'm like, That's my dad. (That's hilarious. . . .) But no, it was, Rocky was so fun. I actually played Rocky in Rocky Horror Picture Show. And that was really fun because we actually took an 80s kind of turn with this more than rather the 50s elements, (Okay.) through an 80s element, because if it seemed more, um, I guess we, we could try to figure out how to make it more modern (Yeah.) and more relatable. (Yeah.) So, uh, our costumes were different. I was actually modeled after, um, a former Graeland alumni slash Olympic track star, Bruce Jenner. So, Caitlyn Jenner, yeah. And I was modeled after her and I wore a white fishnet shirt and blue tight shirts.

**Mike Hoffman 25:19**

Why do you say you were modeled after, after Jenner? Was that, what

**Conner Holben 25:24**

Well, there was a photo that (. . .) was actually put up in the, uh, in the dressing rooms of the people that we were supposed to work on. (I see.) So, we had the (. . .) so I had the wardrobe of Jenner. (Okay.) And I had the hair of a very famous, he was a handsome dude, um, he was a very famous 60s movie star. I can't remember his name at the point, (Okay.) but my hair was slicked back (Yes.) like that. I basically looked like a Ken doll. That's what they were going for. Just, just I'm a perfect human being according to Frank-N-Furter, (Yes, of course.) and, and I was created for, um, pleasures. And I was created to be looked at pretty much. (Yeah. Yeah.) But, but just the whole show was just so much fun. There was so much laughter going on, even during rehearsals. There were parts where the lines are so funny that we just had to stop rehearsing for a second, just let ourselves get it all out. I

**Mike Hoffman 26:20**

I wondered how you guys did it because there were times when, when I, I know when I was in the audience, we were laughing out loud. (Yeah.) And it's like, I thought, Oh, my gosh. What, how are they going to keep from laughing? (. . .) So

**Conner Holben 26:32**

The, oh, man, when it came to the Friday night one, their job was basically to make us crack. (Yeah.) It worked. And then, like, there were nights where they're like, tried to make each other crack up, because that's, that's part for tradition as well. It's like, this is one of those shows where not everything has to be professional. Nothing has to be so strict. (Yeah.) ( . . . ) let loose and it's more like enjoy the moment. Try new things on stage that you haven't done before.

**Mike Hoffman 27:01**

And I, I, it felt like that when, uh, obviously the performance I went to was not the 10:30 one, but just a normal one, and, and it, it felt like that. There were times when it, it was, like, Is that really what they were supposed to say?

**Conner Holben 27:15**

Yeah. We (Yeah.) bent the rules quite a bit. Were always supposed to do it on Friday, but we're like, Nah, we're having too much fun. Let's keep going. So, yeah, we kept our improv up and we finished it out through Sunday. (Yeah.) So,

**Mike Hoffman 27:27**

That was great. It was great. (Thank you so much.) I'm really glad you did that. Glad you've had those experiences because (Me too.) that's really been very cool. So, let's, let's sort of wrap up by talking a little bit about the church. Just a couple of questions in terms of, um, so, you, you, you mentioned SPEC and the fact that you didn't go to SPEC but were you raised in Community of Christ?

**Conner Holben 27:49**

Um, I actually was. I originally lived in Council Bluffs, Iowa, (Okay.) which had a Community of Christ church there. And my uncle is also a pastor for a Community of Christ church as well. (Okay.) And I've been involved in the Community of Christ ever since my parents have been taking me. I've been going since I was very little. (Okay.) Um, I was involved in Bible school sometimes at Community of Christ. I think I actually finished Bible school at Community of Christ, uh, churches, and, um, now, I'm trying to think, I was baptized in the church, as well by my grandpa, who was also a pastor. (Yeah.) And my whole family is surrounded by religious ( . . . ) and (Okay.) and they've really helped me open my eyes to Community of Christ a little bit. And, uh, I actually went to Guthrie Grove, uh, (So did you go to camp?) Yes. (Okay.) Yeah, I went to camp there. And, um, my, my cousin, Johnny, he worked as a lifeguard there. And, uh, so, which is my uncle, the pastor, that's his son. (Okay.) So, our whole family has just been ( . . . ) surrounded with CoC. (Oh, cool.) And I've never really found a time where I haven't been taken, taken away by the church or anything like that or taken in a different sense that church was bad for me or (Yeah.) anything like that. CoC really makes me feel involved; makes me feel engaged in what I'm saying matters. (That's great.) And, and it's just, um, listening to Bible school, it's helped me, it's helped me understand the Bible a little more and helped me figure out my own ways of relating my own life to the Bible as well, which is one thing that I never really used to do. Actually, Graceland kind of helped me do that because, um, I started, I started reading verses, Bible verses more often and I, at Afterglow started happening, I (Sure.) just feel a lot more secure and I feel a lot more, um, I mean, I feel a lot more happy since the church is part of my life now and campus ministries

are a part of my life now. It's, it's, it's a wonderful feeling knowing that, um, there are, there are people of the same, um, of the same affiliation, and allowing you to have that feeling or have differences, but us still understanding those differences. It's just, it really means that not everybody is going to be on the, it, it, not everybody is going to be on the same topic all the time. Not everybody's going to agree with one another. But we still find a way to relate our differences to each other and find a, um, and find, uh, similarities between them. Which is something that I can't be any more happy about now, because I made a lot of friends here. I met, I met a lot of people who have different, uh, religious beliefs and, and I accept them and I accept the person they are. And it really helps me. Also with diversity as well. They, we all have indifferences, but we're all the same in some, uh, form of way. Which is really, really, uh, it's shocking, but it's because you never really think of it like that. Young, some people don't think of that. At least (Yeah.) that's, yeah, CoC has just been a great part of me. And I'm glad it's continuing throughout my years in college and I hope it continues further.

**Mike Hoffman** 31:49

Yeah. Absolutely. Well, Conner, thank you for this time.

**Conner Holben** 31:52

Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. It, it was it was great time.

**Mike Hoffman** 31:56

All right. We'll sign off then. Thanks.

**Josh Mangelson** 32:07

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