

**Josh Mangelson 00:17**

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

**Carla Long 00:33**

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long, and today you're listening to What's Brewing where we talk about mission activity that happens all over the church and in various ways. And today, we're going to be talking about Pride as in Pride Festivals that happen, usually during the summertime all over the country, perhaps all over the world, I'm guessing as well. And I'm here with three experts, three voices that you might recognize, three names that you definitely recognize, and three really good friends of mine. I'm here with Tyler Marz, Blair White and Karin Peter. And I'm gonna let them introduce themselves. First off, so, Karin, why don't you go first?

**Karin Peter 01:11**

Hi, I'm Karin. And if you're a Project Zion Podcast listener on a regular basis, you've probably heard my voice before. And I ho, I host the Cuppa' Joe series on Project Zion. I also work in Latter-day Seeker Ministries in a variety of areas and, um, have attended Pride before and look forward to sharing that with you.

**Carla Long 01:33**

Thanks, Karin. Uh, Blair, you're up next.

**Blair White 01:35**

So, I'm Blair White. Uh, I currently serve within International Services within the life of Community of Christ. But I, I've spent most of my time within, in service with Community of Christ in, in the mission fields. My last assignment in that role, type of role was in Salt Lake City with Carla. And so yeah, so it was, it was a good time.

**Carla Long 01:59**

It was a good time, Blair, and we miss you. And, and last, but not least, we have Tyler Marz.

**Tyler Marz 02:06**

Uh, hi, everyone. My name is Tyler Marz. I, uh, currently serve as a Latter-day Seeker Expansion Minister living here in Utah. Um, a bit about me, I love to cook and bake. And I have attended Pride in a couple of different places in Washington and here in, uh, Utah, a few different Pride events here, um, and they are a fabulous experience, so.

**Carla Long 02:29**

They are a fabulous experience. In fact, Tyler, that leads me into my very first question. And, so, many people who are listening to this might never have been to any Pride events ever before. So, can we just

give, like, a general, like, what is Pride like? What happens at Pride? What can we expect to see at pride? And, you know, what, just what's it like?

**Karin Peter** 02:49

So, I think it's, um, I think it's really important to say for people who maybe aren't familiar at all that Pride is, um, an annual, usually annual festival, um, meant to focus on the affirming nature of the LGBTQ+ community. And, so, um, if you're not familiar with that, going to a Pride event is a good way to get familiar, um, whether you're part of a Community of Christ congregation or someone else that's interested in, um, justice and equality and fairness and a little bit of partying kind of mixed in there with Pride. So, oftentimes, there's a parade. And that's a great opportunity for, um, people who are new to Pride who want to, um, affirm the LGBTQ+ community, to make a banner and walk in the parade and, um, share on your banner some of our Enduring Principles like Worth of All Persons and Blessings of Community.

**Tyler Marz** 03:51

Pride really varies, uh, depending on where you're at. If you're in a big city versus a smaller city versus a little town, um, different activities, uh, different demographics of people are there. Um, you might have some more wild and crazy experiences and maybe some more tame family friendly experiences. Um, it just depends on where you live and what the culture is like.

**Blair White** 04:18

So, as has been indicated, Pride is a, a time of expression of different, uh, understandings of sexuality and identity. And, so, with that, uh, there becomes, uh, this exuberant opportunity to be an expression of that, of who they are without being judged about that. And, so, in that expression, um, we need to be ready, um, for, um, some expressions that we might, some of us may deem as on the borderline of, uh, whether, um, they should maybe even be participating in this. But it is a time of joy and celebration for those that have been locked in closets, uh, for, literally, many years. And, and, so, I think it's a time, while some of us may be concerned about what is being expressed, uh, it is a time that we need to celebrate with them because they are finally able to celebrate who they are. Whereas, most of us have been able to celebrate who we are throughout our lives and without any concern of, of these matters. And, so, uh, in, in that respect, um, be ready for your eyes to be opened. Uh, many of the Pride events, especially in larger cities, as been, has been expressed. Um, and, and, yeah, so, so yeah, so I, I think just, Pride is a, a wonderful way for us to get to know, uh, some of the LGBTQI community in ways that we've not experienced.

**Karin Peter** 05:59

Carla, you had a super example about that. You want to share your example of what you, um, experienced and saw when you went to Pride?

**Carla Long** 06:06

Well, you know, everyone on this podcast, and perhaps all the listeners who have heard me before, I know that I'm from Kansas. There are times when my little Kansas eyes just, like, percolate open. And, so, um, I was at Pride in Salt Lake a couple years ago, pre pandemic, and, um, there was a person walking around. And they were only wearing stickers. And that was it. Just stickers. And I, um, I still

remember it three years later, what that looked like. And I was, I was shocked. But I'm, like, after my initial shock, I'm, like, You know what, if that's how they feel comfortable here and, and they can express themselves, then good for them, get going with it. And, so, I was, it was a pretty shocking experience, though, for my little Kansas eyes. And after I saw that, I really feel like I started looking at people differently at Pride and, and allowing them to do what they felt like they wanted to do in order to express themselves. You know, one other thing I was thinking about Pride, and hopefully we have some other experiences here. There's a ton of booths at Pride. And I actually my very first Pride was in Provo, Utah. And I learned so much just from walking around and looking at all the different booths. Like, for instance, I did not know at the time that there are different flags representing different, um, parts of the LGBTQIA+ community. There's a trans flag and there's a, a pan flag and then, like, the progress, is it called the progressive flag, progress flag, something like that? Uh, and then there's the one that's gray and black and purple. Which ones that?

**Tyler Marz 07:50**

That one represents asexual.

**Carla Long 07:53**

Asexual. So, I didn't realize that all, there's all these different flags. So, I had a pretty steep learning curve. When I first went to my first Pride. Did any of you experience that as well?

**Karin Peter 08:04**

So, I had, I had realized there were more flags much later. So, I was very naive the first couple of times, but my, my experiences at Pride were several decades ago, my original experiences at pride, and I was very naive. And it was in, um, San Francisco. And, so, it was quite an experience for me to, um, to attend. And it was, I was so naive that some of my gay friends were very concerned about me actually attending and they were like, Okay, we need to prep you before you go because this is, this is not in your realm of experience. And I appreciate them kind of walking me through some things. But that was before the, um, the more broad, outward expression of multiple, um, aspects of sexuality and gender identity. It was before we really started talking about that. And, um, at that time, you wouldn't see flags other than the rainbow flag, um, out. That's been a later addition, which I think is really great because we lump LGBTQIA+, um, all together when we're talking about, about ministry with people who are other than, um, straight, usually white Community of Christ congregational people. We have that in our mind and so when we talk about people who have other gender identity or sexuality or, um, behaviors that we're not familiar with, we lump them all in a clump. And I think the various flags bring to mind that that community is just as diverse as any other community. And, so, you, you experience that at Pride. You have the sticker people, like what you experienced, and then you have families who come. And, so, um, it's kinda like Vegas. You can go to a family friendly, friendly, um, hotel, or you can go to a not family friendly, friendly hotel.

**Tyler Marz 10:11**

I'll say for me, my first experience at Pride, um, was simply just attending for myself and it was here in Salt Lake City. And the first event that I went to was our parade that we had in town. And that was my first time ever attending anything that was that overtly queer. Um, and it really was a, a beautiful experience for me because it was my first time to be, um, surrounded by that many people in, uh, full

support of me as a gay man. Um, and that community in general to see hundreds and 1000s of people, they're all in support and having a good time that there was nothing de, derogatory or mean-spirited about the entire thing. And it, there was a point actually, where I remember watching the parade, where I got kind of emotional thinking that I was, I was in a place where I wouldn't have to worry about how I presented myself, the things that I said, how I acted who, uh, that sort of thing. And it was, it was really beautiful. Um, the festival itself in Salt Lake is, um, more tame than other places. Um, and I think that allows for this mixture of, um, of single individuals expressing themselves how they want and families bringing their children to the event, and you just see this, this wonderful community of people living authentically, um, that is really, really neat. Um, and I did want to make a point. I used the word queer. Um, and that might be kind of a hard word for, for some individuals to hear. Um, but I did want to say that the, the LGBTQ community is repurposing that word in a way that is much more positive than it has been used in the past. Um, and so I just wanted to let our listeners know about that. Um, and I think one final note, um, is that depending on which pride events you go to, sometimes, uh, if Community of Christ is holding a booth, we are the only church present at that event. In other places, there are a handful of welcoming and affirming churches that are there. Um, and that's not al, that's not always the case in some places. Sometimes there's no religious or spiritual expression present out at Pride. Um, and in places I think that's, that can be really important and meaningful for people to see that, um, especially those who have been marginalized and hurt by religions, um, see that, that's, that narrative isn't always, um, practiced in churches. Um, and, so, I think it's really important for churches to have a presence at Pride.

#### **Blair White 12:55**

One of the things, um, I'd like to just mention where we've talked about family friendly. Um, while there are some at pride that are pretty, uh, free to, um, let their bodies be expressed and shown as just as they are, uh, one should not take that as that is overtly sexual. Um, if you would go to a beach in Miami, Florida, or many of the beaches, um, in highly populated areas of the country in the US, as well as, well, beaches outside of the US especially, you would not see anything different at Pride than you would see on those beaches. So, um, just because, uh, there's an expression of being willing to let their bodies be shown, does not mean that it, it cannot be family friendly. It, it all matters, it's a matter of how we see the human body. And, and whether it becomes a sexual thing or not. So, I, I just wanted to lift that up. And, so, yes, it can be shocking for those of us who grew up in Midwest or certain parts of rural areas of the country. It can be shocking, but it does not mean it is sexual. And, and I just wanted to, I just wanted to lift that up. Um, and, so, uh, so yeah, so you can expect it, but like, as, as Carla said, you know, you know, you know, in Provo, it's much less, it's much more tamer. Uh, in Logan, Utah, it was even more tame. Um, but, uh, you know, it's, a, again, it's a time of celebration, um, for those, um, that have not been free to express who they are and they, they finally have this, this time. Uh, in, in Utah at Salt Lake Pride, I was amazed. I, I, I've never made it to a Salt Lake parade because I was always at, at the booth setting up. But I was, you know, there's like 100,000 people coming through and experiencing what, you know, what does it mean to be gay. And not only experiencing what it means to be gay or, or on, on the various spectrums of sexuality, but there to learn about what that is. And, so, yeah, so that, you know, back to those flags and all that it was like, Wow, I had no idea there were so many expressions of this. And, so, it's a very good educational opportunity that I, I think is, is valuable for anyone that cares about their neighbor, uh, because whether we want to admit it or not, our neighbors are in those realms. And, and we need to find out and be educated about those things.

**Karin Peter 15:44**

Which is really key to mission. I mean, this episode is talking about mission and being in the mission field. And Blair, I think that's really an excellent, uh, example of what it means to be missional is to be, is to care about our neighbors. And one of the reasons to go to Pride, um, is because we have an opportunity, as disciples who walk in Community of Christ, to show support, to learn to be allies, to, um, talk about, uh, congregations that are welcoming, um, congregations, to, um, offer a place of spiritual respite and hope to people who, as Tyler said, have been abused or hurt in different ways by, um, religious expressions, and, um, to learn about other community endeavors that are doing the same thing, that are working in community to build wholeness, and to restore, um, physical, spiritual and emotional health to people. And we can do that by our presence, um, at Pride by meeting people and being open and building those authentic relationships.

**Carla Long 16:44**

And I don't know if this has come through as much as I was hoping it would come through. But I also just want to say Pride is super, super fun. Like, everyone's in a great mood, like, a super good mood. People are laughing and having fun. One time in Provo, we were right next to the stage, which I do not suggest because the music was incredibly loud all the time. So, if you can get away from the stage, that would be great. But they were having like a talent show. And there was a group of cheerleaders up there. And I gotta tell you, as a former high school cheerleader, myself, I jumped up there and they invited me up there to cheer with them. And it was such a fun and uplifting and awesome moment that, I mean, it was just people being authentically themselves is a reason to celebrate. And it is just a really, really fun time. So, I, if, if you're looking for a fun time, Pride is definitely one of those times and I, um, everything we've said here is super important. But it's also really fun. So, we, Tyler actually mentioned, um, a Community of Christ booth and how important it is to have a booth if you're interested in doing that. And, so, sometimes people don't even know where to start, you know, when they have a booth. So, like, uh, maybe we could talk about what resources to bring, what to hand out. You know, you always should have a handout to give somebody something. What should you be giving people? What are some thoughts about booths for Community of Christ members?

**Karin Peter 18:11**

So, I think as far as infrastructure goes, Blair is the, um, king of infrastructure for event booths. And, um, has, has lots of advice on that. So, Blair, I don't know if you want to start with infrastructure. Um, I care more about what resources we take and how we present ourselves, um, in a booth and what our attitudes are, and, you know, little things like wear a nametag and have your pronouns on it. If you don't know what I mean by that, um, you can either Google it or, um, talk to somebody, but the basics are, uh, there are lots of different ways people, um, express their gender identity. And, so, my pronouns are she/her. So my nametag would say, Karin Peter, she/her. And, um, do that. How you want to be talked to, uh, what pronouns you want people to use when they speak of you.

**Carla Long 19:03**

So, Blair, I think you just got called out. I think it's all you right now.

**Blair White** 19:07

I think I got called out. Uh, infrastructure,

**Karin Peter** 19:10

Well, you're so good at it.

**Blair White** 19:11

So, it, it, uh, infrastructure really depends on what the event provider, what the Pride organization is providing at the event for you and what they're not providing for you. Um, at some places, you will go the event provider, your, your cost for a booth will include a tent. A tent is hugely important. It's hugely important because it keeps you out of the sun. And these are often held in June and you need, and your team needs, to be kept out of the sun. So, um, if your provider is not providing you a tent, then you need to bring a, a, a booth tent with you. And typically that would be a 10 by 10 tent. Um, depending on what you're going to do, uh, at your booth, whether it's just promote who you are as a church and that you want, you want to be an affirming church, um, you may just want a, a sign that, um, either rises up above your tent, no matter who provided it, or you just may want to sign that sits in the, uh, within your confines of your tent. But you want to let people know who you are and, and why you are there. Um, for me, personally, I like to, uh, parlay, um, I think Pride events can provide us an opportunity to show who we are not just by being there and affirming to the community that we are supportive of, of Pride and, and, and the LGBTQI community, but, uh, also an opportunity to express who we are in mission beyond even just this community. So, one of the things that I've done in our, in our Pride events is that I've parlayed with an organization called, uh, Threads of Hope. And Threads of Hope is helping people get out of human trafficking issues. And people in the Pride community know about human trafficking issues. And they care about those issues. So, there's something that we can, can, come, come together, and, and be focused on. And, so, at that, at those booths, we would sell little, uh, little friendship bracelets that are made by, uh, people in the Philippines that are by making them and providing an outlet for us to sell them, uh, we can send profits back to them to keep them out of human trafficking issues. And it's amazing what you can do, have a conversation, um, uh, as you are putting a bracelet on someone. Um, and one of the things I learned in, about putting bracelets on them as they put their wrist out to them, to you to put that bracelet on, is that, uh, I was shocked at the number of people who self mutilate themselves by cutting. And, um, that gives us an opportunity to just recognize the pain that it's out there and to say, uh, uh, words of blessing in the midst of recognizing their pain without calling it out. And, and I think that's important. So, so, yeah, so, there's some things on infrastructure as well as mission that I think is very helpful. Have a couple chairs. Have a table, you know, set it up so that you can be comfortable, uh, so that when people aren't at your booth, um, you can have a seat and relax, but yet be open and willing to accept people as, as they are walking by, greeting them as they walk away.

**Carla Long** 22:53

Thank you, Blair for sharing that. Um, The Threads of Hope, I just want to add, uh, it was just an incredible way to get people to stop by because, you know, like, people always love having little bracelet things on and things like that. And, and when you can talk to them about how their money is actually changing people's lives for the absolute better, then it means that much more. Um, so, spending the \$2 for the bracelet doesn't feel like much at all, um, and you're really changing some



people's lives. So, that was a huge moment, uh, when we were selling those Threads of Hope bracelets. Blair thanks for bringing that up.

**Blair White** 23:31

I want to bring one more thing into that. So, not only do we help people in the Philippines that we're trying to get out of poverty issues and out of human trafficking issues, but we, uh, half of the profits go back to the Philippines for that, but we keep half of the profits. And, so, in Salt Lake, we donated several thousand dollars to the local Pride community in the local Pride organization. So, it's, it's a win win for everybody involved.

**Carla Long** 24:01

Absolutely. I'm so glad you mentioned that. Uh, so, Karin, what, what kind of resources would you say that we need to bring as Community of Christ members and what should the booth look like?

**Karin Peter** 24:13

So, how, how you set up your booth and what it looks like depends on the event. So, if you're at a real staid conference any kind of thing, it would look different than Pride. Pride's a festival. And, so, um, wearing brightly colored T-shirts or rainbow T-shirts with the name of the church on it is one aspect. Um, Salt Lake did that really well. I think you wore neon pink, um, T-shirts with the name on it. But it should also have pieces that identify, um, who Community of Christ is and why we are there. And it can be as simple as a small poster made with the, um, scripture out of the Doctrine and Covenants, that scripture should never be used as a weapon to, to harm people. That's a quote that can be put on a small poster for a nominal fee and put on an easel, um, out in front of your booth at Pride which is really important. Um, information about Harmony, about Sacred Pause, about, um, a welcoming, being a welcoming, uh, congregation. That kind of information is really important to have. The book Homosexual Saints, and I'm blanking on the second volume of that. Tyler, do you remember the name of the second?

**Tyler Marz** 25:29

Touched by grace?

**Karin Peter** 25:30

Thank you. Homosexual Saints and Touched by Grace, um, are both terrific to have. People can thumb through those and even a low note by them that says where those can be ordered. Um, and then something that really represents Community of Christ. The Sharing in Community of Christ: The Identity, Mission, Message and Beliefs. And not so much to force on people, but when people ask, Why are you here? you can flip that to the Enduring Principles Blessings of Community and Worth of All Persons. And people can see that right there in print this, this institutional church has embedded in its official, um, material, the importance and worth of all people. And, so, those kinds of resources are important to have. And of course, the Enduring Prin, Principles tracts that you can buy. And the blue invitation cards. They have that beautiful invitation to Community of Christ and they're so well done. Those kinds of resources are important. Um, Project Zion Podcasts. Put something up about that so that people can find us and can, uh, listen to the, the broad, uh, spectrum of episodes that we have on Project Zion. And information about your congregation and why you're here so that they can find you as

well. If you have a Facebook page, put that up so people can see. If you have an Instagram account. If you're, I mean, if you just have a web page, then put that information out there for people to get it. And put a sign up sheet so if people want more information they can, uh, they can sign up. Most people won't. Most people, um, will just say, Hey, can I friend you on Facebook? And, so, you want to have your smartphone there so that you can do that and find each other on Facebook. I've made lots of good, uh, relationships that way. But the other thing is that, uh, whatever you bring is irrelevant if you don't bring yourself with the attitude that says you're open and you're there to talk to people and you care about them. And, so, even if you're there with your best friends, uh, from your neighborhood or from your congregation, um, don't stand just chatting to each other. Don't turn your backs to the people who might be coming up to your booth and table. Keep yourself open, keep your body language open. Um, even if you're shocked, try to keep an open expression, um, on your face and keep your judgement to, uh, to yourself. But be available. Be a, be, um, relationship-wise, be available to speak to people. Don't be closed off. And, and that's really important, too. And don't think you can't do it. So, I'm going to call out, um, um, my friend, Mary, who lives in, um, Idaho Falls. So, Mary, if you're listening to this, sorry. But, um, she's in her 70s and we had a small group and there was a, a friend who participated in our group who was part of the queer community. And we were talking about Pride, um, in Idaho Falls which is pretty small. I mean, it's, it's really small. But, um, Mary, bless her heart, from Iowa originally, Mary, little congregation in Iowa, she makes her, uh, Community of Christ poster and her first time ever, she walks in the Pride Parade in Idaho Falls because it was important to her because of her friend from our small group experience. So, anybody can do it. Even if it's, even if it's you and a poster and walking, um, in the parade, you can participate.

**Carla Long 29:08**

Well, that made me cry a little bit. Thanks, Karin, for talking about Mary. She is, well, just one of the best people I know. So thanks for saying that. Um, and thank you so much for all the good advice. Um, it, you know, these are things that we know in our head, but these are things that we forget very easily. Um, when we're feeling uncomfortable, when we're feeling like we might not belong, when we feel like we don't understand what's going on, it's very easy to be closed off and only talk to people that we know. So, um, again, I'll say it again. You've already said it and I've said it once be, bring your genuine, loving, caring wonderful selves there and just know that there's lots of people who desperately need ministry in their lives. And remember that at all times. Um, Tyler over to you. What do you think about booths, like, what do you think we need to have at booths?

**Tyler Marz 30:00**

You know, Karin and Blair both mentioned a lot of really great things. And I think what's at the heart of that is that, um, the, who we are as a church, um, and our, our, uh, mission, message and beliefs inherently are, are welcoming. I mean, they talk about how much we value everyone, how much we love and value diversity, and how important that is. Um, and it's, it's important to share that whether that's in physical form with the things that we bring or in our conversations with people. Um, and I think it, it's really important to know that, um, they're not just words on a page, um, but that we actually live that out. Um, so, an organization that Karin mentioned, Harmony, I just wanted to give a small, a small plug for that. Um, if you are a congregation that, um, you know, in, in your heart knows that you're, you're a welcoming and affirming congregation, um, it's important to reach out to Harmony, uh, 'cause they'll be able to work with you, to, uh, to work you through a process that helps you create a



welcoming and affirming statement for your congregation. It helps you, uh, know, if the things you're doing in your congregation, um, are, are truly welcoming and inviting of all. Sometimes we make little mistakes that we don't realize that, uh, can maybe be a little off putting to people. So, I think, uh, especially the queer community. And, so, I think it's important that if you're considering being at a Pride event and you want to represent Community of Christ, give Harmony a call, um, or an email and, uh, have a chat with them. Say, This is something you're really interested in. This is your first time doing it. Um, what do we do? Are we ready for this? Um, are we ready as a congregation to truly welcome these people in our doors, um, and not perhaps accidentally say something or do something that's going to be off putting to them, um, because that's really important. A lot of queer individuals that step into church with, um, this is probably their first time or their first time in a long while. Um, and, so, impressions are important. And being in a Pride event, especially, and ( . . . ) are important. So, how we act, um, what we do, the kind of messages that we portray, the things that we give out, all of that matters and points to who we are as an organization. Um, so, there's all that seriousness. I think, one fun thing to have at a Pride event and something that we did recently, um, is that our congregation bought a button maker. So, we could make those little plastic pin buttons. And the neat thing about that is that you can print out whatever you want and put it on that button. You can put a Mission Initiative, an Enduring Principle, a fun image, uh, our, our church name with a rainbow background. Um, whatever is meaningful to your context that you're living in, your city, um, or your congregation. Um, and that's, uh, those buttons are fun to hand out. They're a conversation starter. And they, uh, they're a little bit of Community of Christ given to them, right? It'll always remind them of that one booth that they went to that was a queer inclusive church that was present at Pride.

**Carla Long** 33:10

And I'm so glad you brought up the buttons, Tyler. I was gonna' say two things about that. So, um, I know making buttons sounds kind of tedious, but I will tell you that we had a, a team, um, at, well not necessarily at our church, we were at a, a conference, and they were looking for something to do, and I'm not kidding when I say they sat down and made 100 buttons, and they were thrilled to do it. So, you know, you don't have to make all the buttons all by yourself. There are people who are interested to help you and want to help you. So, just ask the question. And I will say another thing about the buttons. Because we're in Utah and we're a little bit tongue in cheek here, we did make some buttons with Emma Smith and she's eating popcorn, just watching all the craziness happen. And those buttons were the most popular buttons we have ever handed out. Because, but that's Utah. That might not be true in other parts of the church, but Utah is a very interesting place. Uh, well, this has been really a really solid conversation about the booths. I think this has been a really important conversation about the booths. Was there anything that came up for any of you about booths that we should say, before we move on? Karin.

**Karin Peter** 34:14

I did want to say that I keep a, a checklist. And it's for booth prep. And, so, I can send you the file and it can be put up on the Project Zion website; everything from bringing your own canopy tent if it's not provided and bringing, you know, water and chairs to what kinds of things to share and how to make sure you have a, an opening, welcoming, um, persona there. So, it's a great checklist.

**Carla Long 34:42**

That's really helpful. Thank you, Karin. And I don't think we, I know Blair mentioned it, but I don't know if we stressed enough, like, if you have room, set up some chairs. People are always looking for a place to sit when they're walking around a festival and, like, even if they need to sit down and tie their shoe, they're always looking for a place to sit and then conversation can actually really happen there. So, if you have space and you have extra lawn chairs, put them out. People will be happy to use them and sit and chat with you. And that, it's a really incredibly good missionary tool. Um, okay. Anything else about booths?

**Blair White 35:15**

One of things I wanted to add is in, in Salt Lake, I don't know if it's still being done, but, um, when I was there, we actually had two booths because, uh, we had a booth for the we were selling the Threads of Hope that we were representing Community of Christ well with. But we also had just another booth for the congregation. And, that add, addressed more of what Carla was saying about, here's a place to sit down and have a conversation. Um, and, so, um, now, not every congregation is going to be able to do that. But just recognize there are a variety of options you can do. And I'm going to take this opportunity to kind of move into our next question of what experiences we had at Pride, uh, that have to do with booths. And, and that's the lift up. Um, at Salt Lake Pride, there was another congregation, outside of Community of Christ that had a booth. And, uh, it was our friends from the American Baptist congregation there in Salt Lake, great group of people. They had a booth that just said free hugs. And they just gave people hugs. Uh, and everybody, not everybody wants a hug, but a lot of people want and need a hug. So, so, that's an experience that I had at Pride that was, um, different than what Community of Christ was expressing, but is a expression that any congregation can also offer.

**Carla Long 36:38**

I love that Blair and I also love that you are taking on double duty as host. Thank you so much. That is our next question. I appreciate that. Um, what, so, is there any experiences that you've had, all had at Pride that, you know, that you can share with us?

**Tyler Marz 36:52**

One experience at Pride that I had was actually last year when I went to the small town of Rexburg, Idaho. Uh, this is an extremely conservative college town. Uh, 98% LDS, more so than Salt Lake City. And this, this little town also had some significance probably because it was where, it was my alma mater where I graduated college. Um, and this fest, this Pride festival that we went to was my, their first Pride festival and my first time stepping foot back in that town after graduating. And it was an immensely powerful and beautiful experience to see. Queer people and allies come out into a space in a park where they were welcomed and affirmed. Um, uh, that was the most positive, loving, joyous, happy place, um, that day. Um, it was, uh, amazing to be there and to see a couple of people that I went to school with that were still living there that were, uh, visiting this festival for the first time wanting to get involved, experience it, um, and to see this, uh, this little conservative town hold such a progressive thing for them. Um, it was, it was humbling. It was beautiful. It was powerful. It was, uh, truly happy. Um, and we were the only church present there in this little conservative town. Um, and people were, frankly, surprised and shocked to know that affirming churches existed, um, at all. Uh, so, that was my experience at Rexburg, Idaho Pride.

**Carla Long 39:02**

Thanks, Tyler. That's made me cry again. Thank you for sharing that. I really appreciate it. I, I'll share, I'll share a story. So, I was attending a Pride festival. I don't even remember where it was. But, um, a couple came up to me a queer couple came up and they were chatting about, you know, all the stuff and, uh, we, we started talking and they're, like, So, we're gonna get married and we cannot find anyone to marry us. N, no one. We will not find, cannot find anyone to perform the wedding. And they're, like, Does your church do that? I'm, like, Oh, sure. Of course we do. Of course. Of course. Um, we do. Of course. And, so, they said, Okay, and they walked away and I just thought we'd never hear from them again. Well, we did. They sought our church out. They found me specifically and they said, and they came to the church in Salt Lake and they said, Carla, we are wondering if you would perform our wedding, perform, um, the ceremony. And I was just so thrilled that that had happened. And, so, they and I worked together for a couple, for six months before they got married. And it was one of the most beautiful weddings I've ever attended in my life. And it was just so full of love and so full of all of this celebration that it kind of felt like Pride all over again, actually. But the fact that we had made that connection and they had remembered that they wanted to, they set, they sought, that's the word, they sought us out, just try and find us again, what meant, really meant a lot to me. Any other experiences we want to talk about?

**Karin Peter 40:31**

Carla, I think those, um, surprises are one of the blessings of, um, disciples being willing to go outside of our comfort zone and do something that is, um, supportive and, uh, welcoming. And, um, a lot of times people in, in Community of Christ congregations think, Well, why would they do that if people aren't then going to come to my church because isn't that what mission is all about? And it's really not. A mission is about engaging with people and building relationships with people and bringing blessing and, um, wholeness and healing to people. But those surprises when somebody comes back to you, and I think most of us have had those kinds of experiences, either from a Pride event or other similar events. Um, those are just extra blessings on top of it. That's, that's, um, that's not so much the goal as it is just, um, an affirmation that what we're doing is the right thing. And, so, I want to thank you for sharing that.

**Carla Long 41:33**

Uh, thank you for making my story sound, uh, much better. Um, so, I have really enjoyed talking about this. And I, the ( . . . ) I only have one question left. And I think that we've answered it over and over and over again. But I want us to be able to answer it just one more time. My last and final question for you as the wonderful panel that you've been is, Why is going to Pride even worth it? Why even go?

**Karin Peter 42:02**

( . . . ) I think there's two reasons. Um, one is that it's what we're called to do. That's part of being Community of Christ, and the queer community is part of our community. And so we extend ourselves in relationship. So, that's, that's one really important reason, uh, to go is to be present, um, in our communities and to show, um, our identity. The second reason is selfish. And that is because it's fun. Because it's a bonding experience for your congregation. It's a way to do something meaningful that is, uh, not tedious. It's, well, maybe the setting up the tent and all that kind of stuff. But if you have Blair, I

mean, it's no problem because he will make that go spiffy fast. But other than that, it is really a wonderful, fun experience, um, to do together. And I can't, um, I can't think of a lot of things that you're going to do in ministry as a congregation that would be more celebratory than going into a Pride event.

**Blair White 43:03**

Yeah, I, I, I, I can't, we can't, we can't emphasize enough that going to Pride, um, don't go to Pride expecting your, that you're going to get 10 or 15 people to come to your congregation. If that happens, that's great. But go there just to let them know that God cares about them. And, and to celebrate who they are, right where they are. Um, to me, that's the, that's the, the most valuable thing that you can go. And when you do that, uh, you're going to be touched in ways that you did not expect to be touched. And, and, and so it becomes altruistic in that manner. But it only happens because you're willing to give yourself, uh, for, for others, just to let them know that they're loved.

**Tyler Marz 44:01**

I think Blair touched on a really important point and, uh, mine is very similar to that and that, um, advocacy work doesn't, isn't just meant to be done from a distance or meant to go into a community, um, and, and be in that to with them. And I think a couple of things happen while we're there. Um, it, because so many people have been marginalized and harmed by religion, um, I, I, I might be selfish in saying this, but it's our duty as affirming and welcoming churches to go in there and, uh, and help heal people to truly live what it means when we say that all are worthy, all are called, unity in diversity. These are things we believe at a core. And they're things that I know other people want to hear so badly from a church, but haven't. Um, and we are one of, not all churches are affirming, but we are, we are one of the few that are able to do that. And so going in to a place like Pride and letting them know that people are inherently worthy, regardless of who they are, what they do, how they live their life, um, that they are loved by God, uh, that we value their uniqueness in all of its splendor and glory, that they can be celebrated, um, just as they are. I think that's an important message. And the important reason of why it's worth it to go to Pride, um, that it's, it's our duty to help share that message.

**Blair White 45:51**

One, one thing I want to add is, you know, perhaps I think the reason we're doing this right now, um, is that because Pride Month is coming up. June is Pride Month. Um, and, uh, and, so, I'm assuming this is going to be broadcast somewhere around then. Um, one of the things that we did in my current congregation in Missouri is that last year, each Sunday of Pride Month, we had representation from the LGBTQI community, the queer community, whether that was spoken about, you know, their participation in that, or whether they were just there as part of the worship service and were part of the experience in leading worship. Um, Pride Month is to focus on, uh, that community. And, so, don't let, you know, if you go to a Pride parade, just don't go and let it end there. Keep it, keep it going. Uh, create some momentum and keep it going within the life of the congregation, not just in Pride Month, but in all the months of the year.

**Carla Long 47:03**

Thank you so much, um, Blair. And thank you, Karin and Tyler as well. I have cried three times on this podcast three times already. Thanks for that. I wasn't really expecting to cry. But you have just explained things so beautifully and how important it is for us to be there, how important it is for us as

Community of Christ people and how important it is for people that we're ministering to and with. So, I'm really grateful to all three of you for sharing your expertise and sharing your fun stories. And, uh, I'm, yeah, thanks again for being here.

**Karin Peter** 47:37

Thanks, Carla.

**Blair White** 47:40

Thank you, Carla. It was great to be with you folks again.

**Tyler Marz** 47:43

It was a pleasure. Thanks so much.

**Josh Mangelson** 47:53

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