

533 | Coffee in the Swarm | Adam Sherer
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 00:27

Welcome to Coffee in the Swarm, a Project Zion Podcast production coming to you from Lamoni, Iowa, a campus of Graceland University. The Swarm is our on-campus restaurant in the Newcom Student Union. This year this program is being co-hosted by Student Chaplain Julie Wheaton. Say Hi, Julie. (Hey.) And myself, Mike Hoffman, Campus Minister. (Say hi, Mike.) Oh, hi. It, it's where we interview students at Graceland who are connected to the Community of Christ. So, Julie, tell us how you're doing today.

Julie Wheaton 01:05

You know, I'm doing really good. I have a little bit of windburn on my cheeks, I'm pretty sure, but other than that, I'm pretty great.

Mike Hoffman 01:11

Well, and folks, she's windburned because Graceland has been hit by a very early snow, I, I don't know, maybe not. Snow Storm is not the right word. But, so, anyway. So, what can you tell us about our guest today, Julie?

Julie Wheaton 01:26

Okay, so today our guest is Adam Sherer. He is a triple major in math.

Mike Hoffman 01:35

Okay, help her. How'd it happen? (. . .) math, computer science and data science? (Yes.) Now, your year, second year? (Uh, I'm in my third year.) Third year. Okay. So, data science, data sci, data?

Adam Sherer 01:52

Either one. (How do you it?) I say both? I usually say data science. (Okay. Okay.) (. . .) I don't know. It's

Mike Hoffman 02:00

So, data science. I will use that. So, data science was added as a major after you got here, right?

02:06

I was the first freshman class. (. . .) (All right. Okay. Very good.) Freshman year is the first year

Mike Hoffman 02:12

I knew, I knew it was (Yeah.) relatively new. But, yeah, I have to frame that. So, all right. So, why don't you tell us more about yourself? Like, okay, (. . .) year, major, minor? Do you have any minors besides a triple major? (I don't.) Okay, why not? Yeah, what house are you on?

Adam Sherer 02:31

I'm on Cheville.

Mike Hoffman 02:32

Is that a good experience?

Adam Sherer 02:34

Yes. I love being on Cheville. We have a lot of participation, which is always a lot of fun. So, we have lots of people show up to stuff and, (Cool.) a lot of cool stuff. So,

Mike Hoffman 02:42

I assume that, uh, some of our listeners are probably alu, I know, they're alums. And so I'm sure there might be some listening that are, have been on Cheville before. So,

Julie Wheaton 02:51

Well, I just have a quick question. What made you decide to do three majors here? And do they correlate with each other like a little bit? Like, do you take some of the same classes that go along with them? Or what?

Adam Sherer 03:02

Yeah, so originally, I didn't really know what I wanted to major in. I was originally actually thinking engineering, but obviously Graceland doesn't have an engineering major. And so I went and toured Iowa State and it was, it was great, you know, but I kind of eventually settled on, I actually met with Kevin Bruner. He stayed at my house while I was a senior in high school because, um, the golf team (Oh, yeah.) had a golf meet about 45 minutes from my house. And so they came and stayed and the girls stayed with another family in Woodbine and, um, the, the boys stayed in my house. And, so, he was telling me about the new data science program. And I thought that sounded really great. And, so, I looked into it a little more. And I thought that it was something I was interested in. So, I ended up doing that. Computer science I kind of did just because it really correlates really well, like you said, with data science. It's really a lot of the same classes. And a lot of even though a lot of the classes aren't required for data science, but are for computer science, are really helpful in the data science major. And then I was actually originally a math major. So, or sorry, math minor. I'm sorry. I was originally, um, computer science, data science major and math minor. But as I got to looking at it, I was like, it's like two or three extra classes to get a math major over a minor, so I might as well just do it. So, that's kind of the world that originated any thought process going through. (That's really cool.)

Julie Wheaton 04:17

Yeah, do you know what you're gonna' do with any of those? Like, what kind of direction you're going in?

Adam Sherer 04:21

I kind of have two different tracks that I have set, or at least in mind, I don't know which one I want to do, and they're a little different. But, so, I either want to do, like, front end development. So, like web development, something along those lines. Or I would love to do data science work specifically for, like, a sports team or something. So, (. . .) I've looked at a lot of internships with baseball teams and stuff like that. And, so, those are kind of the two thoughts I have right now, but who knows if that's what it's going to be, you know, by the time I graduate.

Mike Hoffman 04:46

Yeah. Now, you mentioned Woodbine, Iowa. (Yeah.) Okay. So, so is the closest professional baseball team like the Kansas City Royals? (Yes. It is.) Is that your, like, your (. . .)? (Yeah.) Mine too. (I'm a Royals fan.) Yeah, all right, cool. I just thought felt that they announced (Yeah.) yesterday, like, they're interested in using the stadium, or building a stadium in downtown Kansas City. (Yes. I saw that, too.) Cool. So, yeah. Although, I remember going to baseball games in Municipal Stadium (. . .) before Royals Stadium. Yeah. So, okay, I've just divulged how old I am. No, but that's cool. So, um, so you're from Woodbine. So, what was it like for you to go to church in that? Is there a congregation at Woodbine?

Adam Sherer 05:29

There is. There are a few congregations around, but Woodbine, um, does have their own congregation. Um, my church experience is definitely a similar to other people's in a lot of ways, but also very different. Um, the, the main way that it was similar is that I still like a lot of kids, you know, I went to camps and, you know, (Right.) junior and junior high and senior high camp or whatever at Guthrie Grove, and reunions and all that, and I went to SPEC. But it was a little different, um, to a lot of people, especially at Graceland, in that I, my congregation is very small. (Okay.) We have probably, on average, 15 to 20 people every week, you know, and, so, that's not a bad thing, you know. We have a great time. We all know each other really well. That's kind of a cool thing. It's a nice little community. But it is a little different. A lot of people from Kansas City, you know, go to churches with hundreds of people in them, you know, and that's just not what it's like, for me, especially because I'm probably related to about 80% (. . .). (Yeah.) Eighty might be a little low actually.

Mike Hoffman 06:22

Actually, you know, I know, a lot of students think that they come from, well, if they come from small congregations, it's an unusual experience, and it is certainly for many other Community of Christ students that, you know, they, they do, but actually, a lot of congregations in Community of Christ across the United States and Canada are really pretty small. In fact, most churches are really small, you know, it's, it's just like, yeah. So, that 15 or 20 people, I've been in so many congregations that that was, actually that would be a big number for that. So, yeah, so, that's cool.

Julie Wheaton 06:56

Yeah, I remember you bringing up that you went on tour at Iowa State and were looking at the engineering program there. So, was it the actual data science major that brought you here? Were there many other things?

Adam Sherer 07:07

That's a good question. There were a lot of different things that were kind of at play that had an impact on my decision. I went and toured Iowa State and I loved it. And, to be honest, I didn't come to Graceland, I probably would have gone to Iowa State and majored in engineering. And I'm sure I would have enjoyed it. I do absolutely love what I'm doing now. You know, I think I made a good decision. Really the biggest factor for me, and honestly, I think this is the case with a lot of Graceland students even if they don't say it all the time. But the biggest factor for me coming to Graceland was going to SPEC as a kid. I had gone to SPEC, um, three years. I didn't get to go my last year because it was the COVID year. I went three times and I absolutely loved it. But I just, I really love the campus. It just felt really, I just felt really at home here, like, I felt like this is kind of where I was supposed to be almost. So, the data science major was definitely a big step in the right direction for me. That was also kind of a big thing that pushed me. But the biggest factor was really going to SPEC and really feeling like I, I felt like I belonged here.

Mike Hoffman 08:01

Yeah, that makes sense. So, sort of related to that, I mean, so, you know, I did not go to Graceland as an undergrad. So, I don't know what I'm about to ask you. So, this is sort of an interesting thing, but, you know, students over the years have talked about their Graceland experience. So, how would you even describe to our listeners what the Graceland experience is? Or how has it been for you? You know, that kind of thing.

Adam Sherer 08:28

Yeah, that's a very good question. And one that can be a little tricky to answer because it's very different for everybody. (Yeah.) My Graceland experience, if I had to kind of describe it in a few words, I would have to say very involved, but also very fulfilling. I'm involved in about as many things as you can think of on campus from, you know, Enactus Leadership Council to choir to I'm even on an esports team, you know, and everything in between. So, it's stuff that I absolutely love doing. I mean, and I didn't have to do all the things if I didn't want to, but that's kind of the thing that I enjoy the most about is that I do want to and I have the opportunity. I went to a small high school and I can see Graceland is very similar to that. A lot of people in big schools only get to do their one or two things. And that's really all they do. It's not the case for me in high school. And it was not the case at Graceland. I can do as many things as I want. And I, I mean, I love doing all of them. Everybody's super understanding of busy schedules and lots of things going on and they, anybody will work with you to do, uh, any number of things you want to do.

Mike Hoffman 09:24

Yeah, yeah. In fact, you know, you're in Inspire, um, which is the, used to be known as the Community of Christ Leadership Program here on campus, but it is a, a ministry formation or, or a ministry practicum experience. So, um, so, we appreciate you being in that because that's with, with me and the other members of the campus ministries team including Julie. So, yeah. Um, so, how would you describe your church experience while you're at Graceland, if there is such a thing? I mean, I know, um, you mentioned COVID earlier. COVID has done a number of things to campus. But, you know, what do you think about, I guess church experience at Graceland? I don't know how else to say that.

Julie Wheaton 10:09

I guess, I know you're in Afterglow Band. So maybe that's (. . .) maybe, um, you know, you wanted to like, add that in there. Because it's kind of churchy.

Mike Hoffman 10:18

So, explain what Afterglow is for our listeners that might not be familiar with that. So,

Julie Wheaton 10:23

So, afterglow is kind of like a mini church service type worship. We tend to do a lot of music, sing a lot. And we have speakers come and talk about their relationship with God or their church or something like that. And, so, yeah, it's just like a fun, cool thing where, you know, you go and you worship God for, like, an hour, an hour and a half. (Um hmm.) You have fun. And you can dress up and eat good snacks and stuff like that. So, yeah.

Mike Hoffman 10:50

Yeah. So, how, you, you're in the band?

Adam Sherer 10:53

Yeah, I am in the band. I don't play every week. And I usually only play a song or two every week. The coordinator of the band, Danny Dennis, plays the piano, which is also what I play. (Ah. Okay, okay.) He often plays the piano, um, but when he sings or isn't able to, I a lot of times I can do it as well.

Mike Hoffman 11:06

Cool. Very cool. So, yeah.

Adam Sherer 11:09

Yeah, I, I really enjoy that. Um, it's a lot of fun. I love music. I always have, um, played the piano for, like, 13 years. (Do you sing in the band as well or just) I don't sing in the band, But I, I do sing in choir. (Oh, okay.) Not, not so much with the band.

Mike Hoffman 11:24

Yeah, yeah, it takes a little bit, well, uh, you know, worship services on Sunday, by, by the way, for you listening, we shifted this year. Afterglow used to be on Sunday nights. And we had a Sunday morning worship. And we've shifted everything to Wednesday night now because it's really, it fits a lot better with most students' (Oh, yeah.) schedules. I mean, weekends have just become so busy with things. And, uh, so, we're meeting on Wednesday night and it would intimidate me to get up, not to speak so much, but to sing in front of 60 or 70 people,

Julie Wheaton 11:55

And you'd be willing to, Adam?

Adam Sherer 11:57

I mean, I would if you wanted me to (Sing or speak?) Ei, either one, (Okay.) I guess. (. . .) in singing, but I (. . .)

Mike Hoffman 12:07

Now, so I can, I can understand that. So, yeah. All right, very good.

Adam Sherer 12:13

So, my favorite thing about Community of Christ is that it's really, I, I can't think of the right word. But, like, understanding, I guess. Flexible, flexible is a better word, I guess. It's very comfortable, um, in the ways that you can practice your worship in your ministry. Um, I really have a strong belief, and, uh, you can practice ministry outside of just going to church and stuff. And specifically in, in, like, your daily life. That's one thing that I feel like I at least try to do a lot. I think that ministry can be just being nice to people whenever you see them, trying to be as nice as possible, help people when they ask you to, things like that. And, so, I think that the Community of Christ should just kind of keep pushing towards thinking outside the box and just being a little bit more progressive. Um, not that they aren't now, you know, but I think they've done a great job of that in the past. But I think to keep, keep doing that, and just say that, just because maybe somebody doesn't show up to Sunday morning worship every single week, that doesn't mean they're not practicing, uh, religion or practicing their ministry, you know. I think that there are other ways to do that outside of just the typical ways, and not that the typical ways are bad. I think those are great. But I think there are other ways that you can be involved in (. . .).

Mike Hoffman 13:11

Just multiple ways, (Yeah.) it sounds like what you're describing. (Yeah.) So, yeah. So, sort of related to that, but is there one thing you would want Community of Christ leadership to know beyond that? I mean, is there, if you could sit down with, I don't know, President Steve Veazey and say something to him, or, you know, it could be, it, it wouldn't have to be related to that. It could be related to something else as well. So,

Adam Sherer 13:35

I think, just like I said, just make sure that you are paying attention to what the younger generation wants specifically, to everybody. I mean, all generations, you know, everybody that's a church member. But I think trying to push to get more younger people involved in the church is a really big thing that the church should try to work towards. These, they're really the future. I mean, if we don't get younger people in our congregation, we're not going to have congregations in the future. And, so, I think that's just one really big thing that maybe the leaders should know is just really trying to focus on the younger generations.

Julie Wheaton 14:05

At my church, I've actually been wanting to speak at my church for a really long time. Like, I'm pretty sure the first time I asked was in like 2017, (Yeah. Okay.) 2018, I think, and, um, see they plan the speaker's like two years ahead of time. (Oh, my God.) Yeah. Yeah. At church. (. . . the congregation?) Liberty Street (Okay.) in Independence. Yes. And they just, uh, like, the only time that I would ever be able to speak is if someone dropped out or, you know, like, couldn't be able to speak that weekend.

But, yeah, really hard to especially try and, like, include yourself in services like that. Of course, you can do a prayer, like a focus moment, or like, the biggest activity, I guess, or something that someone does, is speaking. And so that's what I've always really wanted to do, but it is really hard. It's really hard to get yourself in there. And even if you ask, sometimes it's just not possible. So, it's really hard sometimes and I totally agree with you, Adam. I think the younger generation is the future. And I think we should be trying to focus on that a little bit more because half of my congregation is like 50 years older and, you know, so there's huge gaps between like all of us. And so, yeah, (. . .).

Mike Hoffman 15:14

I think that's sort of related to what I've learned about being the campus minister here at Graceland is, like, this whole shift to Wednesday nights off of Sunday, you know, is like to say, you know, I remember in, um, some retreats I went through through a, a pilot called Leading Congregations in Mission, it's all about taking Christ's mission out to where people are. Now, that sounds like a location, but it also could be a timeframe. I mean, you know, so it's like, here at Graceland that equated to Wednesday nights. And, you know, I thought, Oh, I'm not sure anybody's going to show up on Wednesday nights. And

Julie Wheaton 15:49

(. . .) and so many people (. . .)

Mike Hoffman 15:54

We're, uh, uh, we're now hitting 70 people some nights when we have, um, a, afterglow. And a lot of it has to do with sort of new leadership as well, or different leadership. So, but, uh, but I think you're absolutely right. It's, it's listening to younger adults, young adults and saying, Okay, where are you? Not just physically, but where are you spiritually? And where are you? You know, like, it's sometimes the music at Afterglow, you mentioned, um, Adam, that you, you know, you play in the band. What do you think about the music that is selected? How would you describe it? Sometimes people ask me, How do you describe Afterglow? Like, you know, you were doing early Julie, a, a, a, earlier, Julie, and I, I said, I said, well, well, anyway, let me ask you, Adam, how would you describe the music, we use at Afterglow?

Adam Sherer 16:44

I think that it's different than what people would expect when you think of like a church. Uh, they (Yeah.) have. Um, it's not necessarily contemporary Christian or (No.) any kind of Christian, you know, but I don't think that's a bad thing. I think that's a good thing. I see Afterglow, honestly, as more of like a spiritual, um, service than even necessarily like a church service. I mean, I know they kind of overlap a little bit. But it's just very, um, I say spiritual (. . .). It's not necessarily like you are going and practicing religion the whole time. It's more so a, a safe space for people to come and kind of join a community and listen to some music. And I think that that's a great thing. I think it's something that Graceland does really well with and really needs. And I think that the Wednesday nights worked perfectly for that reason. The Wednesdays are kind of one day that can be a little slower during the (Uh huh.) week, specifically because there's, like, the protected hours where (Right.) you aren't allowed to have activities from a certain time. But I think that the music really just fits really well with the entire, um, I guess, vibe of, like, what, what Afterglow is going for the whole spiritual thing.

Mike Hoffman 17:42

Well, and you mentioned, like, you mentioned listening to music because that's the other thing, I think, that's a shift away from what I experienced in congregations. It used to be that we would sing hymns. (Um hmm.) But the, the, what's, what I'm witnessing now is it's not that people aren't singing, but they're, if they're singing, they're singing to themselves or sort of privately, but a, a lot of it is music. I, I don't know what genre, if it, well, actually, this year, it's been a lot (. . .) of different genres. Everything from country to, to, uh, pop to rock. Yeah. But what, what, you know, what I get out of it is there's always a message that, like, there'll be a theme that links all of the music (Yes.) together in some ways. And that's not hard for me to see the theme. But it's, yeah, so it's a little bit unusual.

Julie Wheaton 18:29

I know, Adam, you were saying something earlier about other ways to provide ministry and, like, personally, for me, my ministry is mostly music. (Right.) That's what I love to do. And so, like, with Afterglow, I feel as though I'm doing my ministry even though I might not be necessarily, like, singing a hymn or churchy song, but I still feel as though, you know, I'm there to have people connect with me. To, um, yeah, so.

Mike Hoffman 18:51

So, Adam, you mentioned some other things, too, like, eSports that you're involved with. (Yes.) Tell me about that. I mean, is that, uh, I, I mean, I know, it's, well, should I call it gaming? Or is that the right way to phrase it?

Adam Sherer 19:04

That's how I would phrase it. (Okay.) A lot of people have different kind of, I, I don't want to say views 'cause it's not, like, you know, something that people are, like, in a fight about if you say, (Yeah.) but people view it a little differently. I originally had no intention to joining an eSports team. I considered it. But a couple of my friends are on the Rocket League team. That's the game that I play. So, a couple of my friends joined and said that they absolutely loved it. And they were, like, You should join. We could all play Rocket League together. Basically is all what we do. And, so, I said, Okay, yeah, I'll give it a try. And, so, yeah, I joined, um, I think second semester last year, so, I, I haven't been in it that long; about a year I guess. And I do really enjoy it. It, it's very flexible in the sense that if I ever am not able to make it to something it's no big deal. Even games, you know, we have enough people that we have subs so if somebody can't make it we can bring in a sub to (. . .)

Mike Hoffman 19:53

And you compete against, I, I mean, you know, I know a little bit about it. You compete, we compete with other universities, right? I mean, isn't that the (Yes.) idea?

Adam Sherer 20:01

Honestly, I don't entirely know how we match up against the other universities. I know we use a website called GGLeagues. (. . .) Like, that's what they do, is they host eSports leagues. (Okay.) And, so, I believe that we are in leagues that compete either mostly or only against other universities. And I think a lot of times they're a little bit more local, like, Midwestern, but I think that also includes Texas and

Oklahoma occasionally, you know? (Okay.) But I think generally, it's somewhat local, but I'm not 100% sure.

Mike Hoffman 20:31

So, does the eSports team travel? I mean, or do you do everything from here?

Adam Sherer 20:36

The Rocket League team has not traveled yet. (Okay.) We had plans to travel at one point (Okay.), um, last year, but we didn't end up going. I believe there are some other eSports teams for different games that do travel occasionally. I think that a couple went last year. I believe League of Legends went somewhere to compete somewhere. I think Smash goes, uh, travels occasionally. (Yeah.) I think that there may be some plans to travel in the future. I think that this is a, more so, to, a thing that really popped up during COVID, I think, because (Yeah.) (Yeah.) you can do it without traveling, without, um, (Sure.) going to meet other people, you know. But that's kind of one thing that's really cool about it. Like, being on a sports team, a lot of my friends are on track, and they have a meet every single Saturday that they have to (. . .) drive to, you know, and it basically takes up their entire Saturday and they love doing it, but it does take up a lot of time. (Right.) ESports is not the same way. All I do is, we have games every Tuesday at 7 o'clock and so I basically go in at about 6 or 6:30 to warm up. And then I play my game at 7 and I'm done by 8, you know. It's about a two hour commitment.

Mike Hoffman 21:33

And (. . .) when you say go in, you're talking about in the (Yes.) lowest level of Zimmerman?

Adam Sherer 21:37

We play in the lab. (Oh, yeah. Okay.) We can play remote, though. That's the other really cool thing. We had last year, we had a game over spring break, on the Tuesday of spring break, (Okay.) that we couldn't get rescheduled. And, so, I played actually from my sister's house in Texas (Okay.) and my brother-in-law had his Xbox down there. And so I hooked up his Xbox and played from there. But that's, that's one thing that's really cool about it. One thing that I really (Yeah.) love to (. . .) is the flexibility of it. (Yeah.) And that's just kind of a thing all around with eSports, you know. Not even necessarily at Graceland, just everywhere, it provides a lot more flexibility (Yeah.) than other things.

Adam Sherer 21:41

Do you get a scholarship for participating?

Adam Sherer 22:10

I don't. I think some people do, but it's not enough (And you have a coach like the other sports teams?) Yes. So, the head of the program is Jared Doty. I think he coordinates most of the stuff. Honestly, I don't know where the line is drawn between the two, but then (Sure.) the, the coach is Jared Connell. So, they're both named Jared, which is kind of funny. (Yeah.) Jared Connell, he was a Graceland graduate a couple years ago. He coaches all of the eSports teams. So, anytime we go to the lab, he's usually the one in there. Occasionally, um, Jared Doty is in there, but usually it's Jared Connell. (Okay. Alright.)

Julie Wheaton 22:40

So, I know that (. . .) just bit, a little bit more about that. Like, I know, like, we know, their, their sports teams are going to Nationals or conference and things like that. Is that still like a thing with eSports? Or Not really?

Adam Sherer 22:52

Not so much. At least not with Rocket League. I don't think it is for others. We do have, like, what's called, I guess it's kind of tournament play towards the end of the season. You have to kind of qualify for it, though, which is similar with nationals, you know. You have to do well enough. And to be honest with you, I don't know that much about the logistics of eSports. I kind of just show up and play Rocket League (. . .). But, yeah, usually we actually just had playoffs a, a week or two ago and unfortunately neither of the Rocket League teams qualified. We were both one game, one win away, which was unfortunate. We have two Rocket League teams. Yeah, but no, we don't have like a nationals necessarily where you go compete against everyone in the country, you know, but,

Mike Hoffman 23:29

Very cool. (Yeah. Okay.) So, is there anything else you want to tell us? Anything we haven't covered or anything about your Graceland experience, your church experience, you in gen, you, you know, your life.

Adam Sherer 23:42

I'm not that I can think of off the top of my head, but

Mike Hoffman 23:47

All right. Very cool. All right. Well, that wraps things up for this episode of Coffee in the Swarm. Thanks for listening. (This is Julie) and Mike signing off until next time. (Bye.)

Josh Mangelson 24:07

Thanks for listening to Project Zion Podcast. Project Zion Podcast is a Ministry of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.