

# Open Topics (Episode 237): A Prophetic Hymnal with Jane Gardner

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

hymnal, hymns, denomination, community, prophetic

## SPEAKERS

Jane Gardner, Carla Long, Josh Mangelson

### **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** 00:27

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host, Carla long. And today we're going to do another prophetic people podcast. But this time with a twist. Usually, when I talk to guests about what it means to be a prophetic people, I have a solid list of questions that I ask every single time. But today, after speaking with our guest earlier, she wanted to take it in another direction. And after a very short arm twisting session, I realized that we needed to hear exactly what she had to say. So today's podcast is all about how *Community of Christ Sings*, the hymnal that we use in our denomination is prophetic, and I couldn't be more excited about it. So welcome, Jane Gardner, thank you so much for your persistence and your willingness to be on the podcast.

### **Jane Gardner** 01:25

I'm so glad to be here. Carla. This is one of my favorite topics.

### **Carla Long** 01:29

Oh, I'm so excited. So Jane, before we jump into something that we both love to talk about, tell us a little bit about yourself.

### **Jane Gardner** 01:37

Well, my career was in business for 20 years, I was the president of an insurance software subsidiary. And then the mid life, I began to work for the church. And that was about 1998. So I started to work for the church in the functional area of worship, and served that way until probably 2007. I continued with the worship function. But in 2007, I joined world church leadership council, as the President of the High Priest Quorum, and I served there for nine years. And then in 2016, I was ordained as Presiding Evangelist. And I continue to serve in that role now. Bob and I live in Lee's Summit, Missouri, and we attend church in the Lee's Summit congregation. And we have two kids, Sarah, who is an administrator for social security in the US and our son Mark, who has Yea just defended his dissertation at Duquesne

University in communications ethics, and has completed his PhD. So we're very excited about that. And we'll be celebrating this season with him.

**Carla Long** 02:58

Ah, that sounds really good. So many reasons to celebrate so many reasons. So Jane, I'm just gonna ask you a really general question and get the conversation started. I think that we're not going to have any trouble making this conversation happen. So the easiest question, how is our hymnal prophetic?

**Jane Gardner** 03:21

Well, there are many layers to that answer. I will say that when you invited me to the podcast process for the prophetic people, my thought went immediately to a very early experience that I had with the hymnal. You may recall that we released the hymnal in 2013, at the Peace Colloquy, and at that peace colloquy, John Bell was present, as a guest minister, but also to receive our Community of Christ International Peace Award that year for all of his work in peace and justice. And John was so wonderful at our colloquy. Then a year later, in 2014, we were invited by the Hymn Society in the US and Canada to introduce our hymnal to the Hymn Society. They gave us one hour, which was not nearly enough, but and we in that hour, it was Lauren Hall, myself, Jan Kraybill and David Bolton. And we decided that we would use the hour, rather than just flipping through the hymnal and singing different songs, we structured it more like a worship experience and kind of moved, there was a flow to it. And we could tell as we were moving through that introduction, that it was resonating with people. People were kind of chatting and elbowing each other and look at look at this page, look at this page. So that was kind of fun. And then the next morning, I'm in the hallway on my way to breakfast when I happen to meet John Bell in the hallway. And John said, Jane, I just want to tell you that I, my colleagues and I sat down together last night to talk about the introduction to your hymnal. And we've decided that it's the role of denominations like yours, to be prophetic for the rest of us. John, of course, comes from the Presbyterian tradition, and amongst his colleagues would be people from the Methodist tradition, the Catholic tradition, and many more. And so he would have had John would have had no way of knowing how important the word prophetic is to us. It was just the way he phrased it that captured my imagination. And it partly has to do with I think our denomination being a smaller group of people. So we're not as unwieldy as the larger classical Christian denominations, Protestant particularly. But it just was such a mind opening moment for me of how we as Community of Christ can use our song, our hymnal as a mission tool, which is what it says in the very first line of the foreword of the hymnal, it says you are holding in your hands, a mission tool. And that has become so true over and over again. So kind of an amazing experience.

**Carla Long** 06:48

That is an incredible experience. And I just, I've had those experiences too Jane when, you know, someone from a different denomination, says something about Community of Christ, and it totally changes the way I see Community of Christ. Sometimes I get really down on us, I'm like, why aren't we different? Why can't we do this? Why, why, why? And then I realized what we do is incredible. And having a hymnal like we have that has stretched arms far and wide. As we know we have teachers teaching out of it in Berkeley, California, so on and so forth. It's it's pretty phenomenal what we have in our hands.

**Jane Gardner** 07:27

When we, when we did the introduction at Hymn Society, one of the things that I said in my portion of it was, was really a message of thankfulness and gratitude to the Hymn Society, because I'm looking out over that group. And so many of the authors and composers that are still living, were in the room, and to just say thank you to them, for the contribution they made. We just have been so blessed by over the years, at least for me since 1999. I've attended the Hymn Society annual conference, and I've tried to soak, try to soak in information, ideas, knowledge, and then of course, whatever would resonate with our folks, our denomination. And that made a huge impact on the work of the hymnal team. Just to know the things that we knew. So for example, I will say, it was at hymn society that we heard the statistic that people will sing what they want to be like before they will live it, so they will sing it before they live it. And that was really eye opening for us. In other words, we're not aiming for a collection of poetry or songs that identify us as we are right now. There's some of that in there. But our goal became what is the prophetic vision for how Community of Christ will be in the future. So that was really important to us. And we learned that fundamentally at hymn, Hymn Society, we hosted the Hymn Society at the Temple and Auditorium in 2001. That was well before our hymnal, again we were learning and and meeting people. And at that particular conference, in our temple, we did a daily prayer for peace with them which many of them still remember and talk to us about. We also had Mel bring or in the hymnal. Her name is listed as Mary Louise Brindle, who is a professor at Brevard college. And she wrote, "Light Dawns on a Weary World," (That's number 240 in the hymnal) in Independence. So she went to one of the sessions at that conference and was so moved by that session that she went back to her hotel room and wrote the text for "Light Dawns on a Weary World. And William Rowan, who wrote the tune also was present, and has been in our temple. So he ended up naming the tune Temple, Temple of peace. So it was just a very cool connection. And then one of the neatest things that happened at that conference that was again, like I said, eye opening for me, Paul Westermeyer, who is Lutheran, who is a well respected author and professor, in that tradition, attended a brown bag lunch session that the Hymn Society asked us to hold for people who were wanting to know more about Community of Christ, because of course, we were hosting the event in our buildings. But we really never had a chance to talk about who we were. So they decided to do it as the brown bag lunch. And so we're sitting in this brown bag luncheon and the only world church leaders in town, because it was July, were me and for the conference, and Danny Belrose. So Danny, and I did our best to answer all the questions. And toward the end of the session, Paul Westermeyer, this wonderful Lutheran professor just said to us, you know, you all have just recently changed your name. And he said, I just want you to know that I'm really jealous of you, because you've changed your name to describe what you are living into what you want to be how you want to be. And I'm stuck with Luther.

**Carla Long** 11:49

Oh, I mean, it's kind of true.

**Jane Gardner** 11:53

I just thought it was funny. I didn't really, I mean, I tried not to laugh too much at the time, but it was it was one of those Wow, he's right. You know?

**Carla Long** 12:02

Yeah. I mean, like, and I've never thought about that before, you know, people who are Lutheran, they're kind of a little bit stuck in the past. I mean, of course, they move forward, of course, they've made changes, but just a little bit stuck in the past and with Community of Christ, we do have that opportunity to can be continually listening to where God is calling us to be and doing our absolute best to get there. Do we fall short? Of course, all the time. But we still at least we have that chance to do that. And I think like you talked about your the overarching philosophy with hymnals. And you just said this little while ago is that we sing our beliefs before we act in them. And then we can kind of sing our way into them. So it might help. I mean, you might not be able to answer this question. But how long do we have to sing them? Before we get there? You know what I'm saying?

**Jane Gardner** 12:53

Probably forever.

**Carla Long** 12:55

Probably Probably,

**Jane Gardner** 12:56

Well the weird thing is the other statistic the Hymn Society will tell us that hymnals are usually only good for about 25 years. Ah, our last one *Hymns of the Saints* went longer than that. We stretched it a bit. But most denominations start to feel the pinch at about 25 years, which means they're their denominational beliefs, their doctrine has probably shifted in that 25 years, as well as the culture, the surrounding context. And so come about 25 years is what the Hymn Society tells us, you start to have trouble finding hymn texts that relate to the now the current situations. And so usually denominations about every 25 years will issue a new hymnal for that very reason. So I guess maybe the answer to your question is 25 years.

**Carla Long** 13:57

How interesting that, yeah, that we're ready to live into those new and prophetic ideas in 25 years, sometime in those 25 years. How interesting to think about Yeah, so cool. So tell us a little bit more. I know, you have some more stories to tell us. And I really, and I'm already loving your stories. Of course, I love it when people, outsiders of the denomination appreciate Community of Christ. That always feels really good.

**Jane Gardner** 14:25

Yeah, there's, there's just, I'm so so grateful. And I think the team would say they're very grateful for the foundation that the denomination laid for this project. We started the project in 2008. And you might recall that that was the same timeframe that we came up or world church leaders, worked with the International Leaders Forum to identify our Enduring Principles, our Mission Initiatives. We already had our mission statement, but the idea that those were articulated in what was then called the We Share document. And now we're calling it Sharing in Community of Christ. That was a really clear roadmap for the prophetic voice. So we could look at each poem that we were faced with each idea that came before the team for consideration, and compare it to that Sharing in Community of Christ and say, Is this really us? Or is it not? We had one session I'll never forget, we started at the Temple chapel with tables in the round. And it was the seven of us on the here, hymnal steering team, and the First

Presidency. And we spent a week on and off, going through the content, the contents of where we were at that point, it was like an amazing experience. And the conversations that we're able to point to to say, Wow, this is challenging, but, you know, it really is somewhere we want to be and want to go. I think in the end, and I'm gonna say in 2012, when we're ready to go to press, our final interaction with the Presidency, I think we only had 25 texts that we were still discussing in terms of whether it really represented us or not. So it was the final in or out decision for those 25. So having the Presidency's help, also is making sure it's not just you know, the seven people in the room who are deciding things I just feel like there was such a broad base of participation and voices, because we field tested so much information and got it back from reunions and camps and from missions and or conferences and from congregations. And people are very free to tell you what they think. And then we did an online survey in during that timeframe where we asked the church to go online for our prior hymnal *Hymns of the Saints*. and to indicate which of the hymns were hymns that they thought needed to move forward to the next generation. So we didn't ask him what are your favorites? Even though I am guessing some people filled it out that way? Really, our question was what really needs to move prophetically, you know, into the future. And that those results were very helpful to us. We kind of kept our eyes on those. We did learn through that survey, not to touch the Christmas music.

**Carla Long** 17:49

Ah, interesting.

**Jane Gardner** 17:51

People love their Christmas music. So we do know

**Carla Long** 17:56

there's there's some new favorites in the Christmas music Danny Belrose's, "A Stable Wrapped in Starlight" ... when the present holds no prompts. Oh, that's so good.

**Jane Gardner** 18:06

So there's some really cool ones in and "Starchild" And yes, there's some really, really good ones there. But we also you'll notice most of the old standards are there. So

**Carla Long** 18:19

yeah, that would be hard to give those up, wouldn't it? That would be exactly. You know, I was oh, go ahead. All right, go ahead. I was just thinking about what you said about that, that base, that foundation, that Community of Christ is kind of put down for the hymnal and for the church at large in 2008. And so when people in Salt Lake City, people who are new or whatever they say things like, I'm so impressed with where your denomination is, is with these beliefs in this theology. And I always say it was never it's not easy to get there. You know, we it's been a struggle for us to get there. So, you know, having, having that struggle is was probably pretty important for the hymnal, the people working on the hymnal as well, it's like, because you had to struggle through that. At the same time, while putting together this document. What was probably then a document that was going to lead the church for the next 25 years or so that was a huge responsibility you had?

**Jane Gardner** 19:19

Well yeah, but it was I just felt so blessed when when we got the green light from World Church leaders to go ahead with the project. It just was such a blessing to have the people on the team. And you know how that God thing can happen. Sometimes it's just the right people at the right moment. So to have Joey Williams, so helpful, especially well for lots and lots and lots of reasons for Joey musically as well as languages and and his theology was important. We had Peter Judd and Bruce Lingren from the theology task force. So that voice was well represented And Peter was one member on our team who had participated in the *Hymns of the Saints* process. So we had some history, helpful history on how things were done last time. And then of course, Jan Kraybill and her musical eye. And Lauren Hall as the project administrator just kept us all in line and scheduled and we spend a lot of hours together. And then David Bolton was added, and David became the keeper of the mother spreadsheet was actually a spreadsheet, Carla.

**Carla Long** 20:35

A spreadsheet, got it.

**Jane Gardner** 20:36

David kept all the data for us and kept us organized. So I just felt like we had the right people at the right time. It just would have been a different outcome without all of that different expertise and talent. So I'm, I've always been very, very grateful for that.

**Carla Long** 20:54

You know, Jane, you were talking about when we when we were chatting about this yesterday chatting about the podcast, you talked a little bit about how the hymnal team made a real effort to address the real world. And what was happening right now. Could you talk a little bit more about that right now, your

**Jane Gardner** 21:12

One story I could tell you about that was at a Hymn Society Conference, Carl Daw, who is an Episcopal priest from Boston, and a good friend of ours. Carl was in charge of a session where he introduced or kind of walked through his poetry, some of his songs and we have quite a few songs of his in our book. And he came to one in his collection that was called "Friend of the Streetwalker." And this is at hymn society now at the annual conference. And he said, you know, no denomination has put this in their hymnal. And it's been around for a while, he said, you don't just be really interesting to see what Community of Christ does with this one.

**Carla Long** 22:04

Oh, there's a little bit of a challenge there.

**Jane Gardner** 22:06

Well, and I was nervous, I ran back to my room later to look because I had my binder with me of where we were at that moment. And sure enough, it was in there. Wow. And it was like, Okay, so the "Friend of the Streetwalker" is a perfect example of taking the message of Jesus, and contextualizing it and making it real. And that's not always easy for us to do. It was a particular challenge for the the team to think about what happens in our daily lives, that is so difficult to handle or challenging for us or depressing for us, whatever that emotion might be. And what what should we be singing about it? So



there is a song and a collection called "Little one Born to Bring." And it is a song that is principally to be used in the death of a child. And it's a tough one. It's, it's really hard. And we had a lot of conversation about whether we really wanted to put that in the book. And one of the key questions is, was when in worship, would you sing that song. But we went ahead with it, we just felt like there needed to be something in there that would address that kind of grief and sadness. And I would say within two months of the hymnal being released, we received an email saying that song was being sung at a funeral for a young person who had passed away. And they were so grateful for its inclusion. So you know, real world. There's also less obvious ones that might talk about. One of them is "When We are Called to Sing our Praise," which has to do more with when we are not feeling full of praise. And it's, it's got that I don't feel like this right now. Or I don't feel God right now. Or I'm unhappy right now. And so that text is in there with, you know, some hope in its language or not, not an answer to the problem, but more of an identification of it. And then a realization that we stand on our faith that we can keep going on the journey. So that's important. And for me, especially during this time, my mom was suffering from Alzheimer's, and we were living through that as a family. And there are two songs in the collection that deal with those kinds of dementia or Alzheimer's situations. And those two, I still have trouble singing them, I get kind of emotional. But interesting enough, not only is it talking about the disease and and what it does with people in terms of their memory and their living, but it also has poetry aimed to comfort the caregivers, or to give the caregivers, some support, I guess would be a way to say it. So, you know, those are just a few examples of the real world kind of things that have been just there's, there's a whole lot of them.

**Carla Long** 25:44

There are there really and I just wanted to pipe in really quickly at a lot of the people in our Salt Lake Congregation are in the LGBTQIA+ community, and we were singing a song the other day, we were singing number 274, "God We Gather as Your People." And there's a Oh, and also in Utah, the suicide rate for people who are LGBTQIA is very high. And there's a there's a verse that says, Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear and shame. so afraid of who they are and who they love. May the message now be Oh, I'm getting teary right now. May the message now be banished, that your love is for the few. May their faith in you renew, and I lost it in the middle, I was standing up fret and I just lost it. And I'm bawling throughout this hymn. So because I just felt it so keenly to watch these poor people are hurting so badly. And it just it made the entire service for me.

**Jane Gardner** 26:47

Yeah, it I you know, this is a great example, Carla of, you know, we hadn't had the national conferences yet. As we were going through the process. So it, it would be more an example of the Enduring Principle of the Worth of All Persons. And kind of in our, in our team's discussion, we landed on all means all. All means all. And you have to figure out what you're going to sing about that. So that particular song was one of the ones we used when we introduced the hymnal to the Hymn Society. It was kind of in the middle of the program that we had put together. And we were in the midst of singing it. When on the front row, Richard Avery of the Avery and Marsh songwriting duo, who were pretty famous in the 70s. Richard Avery kind of stood up from his seat and turned around and motioned for the whole congregation, we're talking like 400 people to stand while we sang that song you're referring to. And I think there were, were a lot of people from the community, the GLBTQ community who resonated with it, and I there were just a lot of tears, a lot of arms around shoulders, comforting each

other. So I could tell that that particular song had had struck a chord, and it's not available and and I don't know of any other hymnals that have included it. So that's, that's pretty cool.

**Carla Long 28:28**

Yeah, they're missing out. They're missing out for sure. Because literally, that just made my whole worship service. I don't even remember what the sermon was about. Sorry, whoever preached it. It was that, that actually that stanza that really just stuck out for me. So how, how powerful hymn the hymnal can be is just exciting to talk about Jane.

**Jane Gardner 28:48**

Yeah, I would say that it challenges us as well. So for the church, as a whole, the song "For Everyone Born" has really resonated. But I have to say we came very close to it not being included. And one of the reasons was we struggled with the fourth stanza.

**Carla Long 29:12**

It's a tough one it's hard.

**Jane Gardner 29:14**

It's a tough one. And we actually went back to Shirley Erena Murray and said, Shirley could we omit this stanza and print the others? And after some conversation, she said, No, I think it's, it's the whole you have to use it as a whole. So we did a lot of not just soul searching, but we did a lot of consulting. So we talked to counselors, we talked to people who have been abused, we talked to social services, it we did our homework in terms of what it would mean in a congregational setting to sing that stanza, and kind of whether it's served its purpose or not, I I'm not I don't presume to know. But the advice we received was, go ahead and include it. And then people who can sing it will sing it. And those who find it difficult won't. And they will make their they'll self select, they'll make their own decision. And that's kind of where we landed on it, but it was touch and go there for a while. Because it was so challenging.

**Carla Long 30:29**

Yeah, I when I sing that song, and I love of course, we love singing it in Salt Lake City, we love singing it. But when I get to that stanza, there's part of me that gets a little bit tense. Because I think about the people who have been through situations like that. And I wonder what they're thinking, especially like new people, visitors, so on and so forth. I always wonder what they're thinking about it.

**Jane Gardner 30:51**

Yeah, it's good that those of us who are born and raised in the denomination or who, who have been a part of it for a long time, not to just sit and take what we're singing for granted, or to just kind of breeze through it without investing ourselves in the content. That happens. And I know it happens all the time. But for me, that stanza will always be one of those thought provoking. Is there someone I should hug afterwards? Is there you know, is there is there someone I need to chat with about this, and it always brings that to the fore, which I feel like can can be a really positive thing for community congregational life. One of the other challenges Carla and I would point to the song "When the Poor Ones," which is both in English and Spanish, it's 290, and 291. This is an example of a song. And we didn't find very many of these. But where the role of those of us who are dominant in the culture is is takes a back seat.



And this particular text talks about the blessing we received, we receive from those who are typically marginalized, or those who are oppressed, the blessing they have to offer to all of us. So it's a different perspective than often is, in our context, in our culture, where we have those who have and those who have not. And this text basically says those who have not bless us in these ways. And I was really grateful to find some of that, because I think it's an important rubric for those of us who would identify as some kind of dominant culture to make us more aware. And to kind of help us think through what it means for us to be in the dominant culture and how we affect and a good stewardship over that. And it inclusivity becomes a real important issue.

**Carla Long 33:17**

And I think when we were talking about that yesterday, you also mentioned a hymn by Tom Troger about for writing for people on the margins, as well.

**Jane Gardner 33:29**

Tom is if I guess if you put me on the spot right this minute and asked me kind of the deepest theological writing in the hymnal, it would be, in my opinion, it would be Tom's and we have several of his texts. But the one I think we were chatting about yesterday was "Each Breath is Borrowed Air," which is 144 in the hymnal. Just this last summer at the hymn Society Conference, Tom was made a fellow of the hymn society, which is their highest honor. And the theme for the conference was Each Breath is Borrowed Air. So it was the theme of Tom's hymn. And he is older. He's a professor at Yale, and he was unable to physically come to the conference, but he videoed an address to the conference, which we were able to view together as a part of our experience. And in his video presentation, he talked about this, Each Breath is Borrowed Air when you read the poem, you don't ever see the word, God. You don't see Jesus. You see it from the standpoint of, of creation and of blessing that comes through creation and whoever creator is, you know that mystery. So there's a lot of mystery. And Tom's background is scientific. So when he was talking to us on the video, he, he said, I wrote this specifically for folks who have this firm scientific method way of approaching things, but who also want to express a faith in something, a faith in something bigger than their science. And so that's what this text is all about this "Each Breath is Borrowed Air" is his attempt to kind of bring together science and faith and to also, perhaps, as you're mentioning, address, those who will feel they are spiritual, but not necessarily religious. And he feels like this particular song would be one that would be very usable in that situation, to help people get a sense of the Divine, of the mystery of the Divine, and yet not say it's this doctrine or that doctrine, or, you know, this, you have to believe this way about God or that way about God. So it was very interesting to listen to him talk about it. And then to know, of course, that it was in our hymnal was also wonderful.

**Carla Long 36:22**

Of course, of course. You know, we're talking about bringing people in from the margins, you know, by the "When the Poor One" song you mentioned and "Each Breath is Borrowed Air," and I really appreciate the the hymn team discussing the core repertoire because that was one of your goals, as well as so that everyone knew everyone when they came to World Conference, they knew songs, and we could all sing them together. Can you tell us a little bit more about the thought that went into the core repertoire?

**Jane Gardner 36:51**

Yeah, in fact, the core repertoire is one of the things that is in the wider Christian community is making its mark for this hymnal outside of Community of Christ. We tried something different that we hadn't seen any other hymnal do. It's actually listed on page 824 of the hymnal way in the back. And it's a list of 103 songs. And those were songs with Joey Williams' help where we got at least the main three languages of Community of Christ, French, English, and Spanish. Or we decided as a team that we were all going to learn the language of origin of that piece. And we only printed it in that language. So an example of that would be like "Kyrie Eleison," which is the Greek and we're all going to learn the Greek and, and we're going to sing it together in Greek. So that was the idea. The other thing I would observe Carla, through my years of working on worship for World Conference, we often had other we often had diverse groups sing at World Conference. So we would hear from different mission centers from different locations in different languages. And it was lovely, I mean, we all appreciate that and enjoy it. What I would say is that that is singing to the congregation. So what our theory was for the core repertoire was that we needed songs that we could sing with each other, not to each other. So that no matter what language you spoke, you'd be able to at least for French, English and Spanish, you'd be able to sing it together and not feel like you were singing to each other. And from a community building perspective that was really important to us. So once the hymnal was released in 2013, we had included in the budget for the hymnal visits to every mission center. And we went around the world, Joey, myself, Jan Kraybill, Lauren Hall. And everywhere we went, we taught those 100 as many of those hundreds songs in the core repertoire as we could. So when we got to the 2016 World Conference, I just started to pay attention to what happened. And sure enough, there were certain songs like "For Everyone Born," where everyone could sing at the same time in their own language. And we didn't have to hear it in English. And then we would have translators translating it, you know, for the other languages, but it isn't the same as singing it yourself. So that started in 2016, and then my observation for 2019 was at that World Conference. It was, throughout the conference, we sang only songs from that core repertoire during World Conference, we limited ourselves to those 100. And we were able to sing them throughout the week together, not one group singing to another group. But that was, that was our focus. And my other observation would be is that we're already wanting to add to that 100 that we want more. We're hungry for it. So when World Church Leadership Council meets, we have French speakers and Spanish speakers, and apostles who serve areas with those languages. And we want more, we want more that we can do together, because it just is such a community building process. So the core repertoire is making a huge difference, I think.

**Carla Long 41:00**

Oh, gosh, I love it so much I love Well, I went to Africa in 1996, a long, long time ago with some students from Graceland, and I loved the songs and I loved the language. And a part of the I feel like I'm part African because I love singing the African songs, so much in the core repertoire, and that throughout the hymnal, it's really one of my favorite things. I mean, to sing it here in the United States, with our congregations is not the same as singing in Africa. But we do our best, we still try our best, and we want to be there. And I still think that we, you know, a lot of churches won't even try that to try and sing in a different language. And I'm always proud of us when we do.

**Jane Gardner 41:42**

Yeah, I, I had that experience actually very close and personal after the hymnal came out. At some World Church Leadership meeting, I happened to be seated next to Mareva Arnaud from French Polynesia, the apostle from French Polynesia. And as a group, we sang a song in French. And we as you're saying, we didn't do so great. Our French wasn't real wonderful. So I leaned over to Mareva afterwards and said, Sorry for our poor pronunciations, and sorry, that we aren't doing better. And she's she just smiled and said, I am just so glad you're even trying it.

**Carla Long** 42:22

Yeah, yeah, it is so meaningful. You know, when you're in another country, that that's not speaking English, to have someone speak English to you, you almost want to hold on to that person like a lifeline because it feels so good to have that moment. And I can only imagine how it feels when people come to the United States and where everything's in English. And although everything's in English, and to be able to sing in your mother tongue must feel so comforting. It does. I'm sure it feels so comforting. And like, these people are trying so hard to understand who I am, too. So it's a beautiful. It's a beautiful way it is really trying to be Community of Christ.

**Jane Gardner** 43:02

Yeah. And I would have to give Joey lots and lots and lots of credit in that area, not only because he's so wonderfully gifted in languages, but he's wonderfully gifted in music. And as a team, it was, it was probably our biggest struggle was to bring those songs into the forefront and making sure we were faithful to the idea that we had of being able to think together and Joey just put hundreds of hours and continues to put hundreds of hours he sent me a report just a little while ago. Here we are six years down the road and Joey's Mission Center in Europe. Actually, the UK put forth a proposal to the Green Belt Conference, which happens in the UK every summer in August, during their bank holiday weekend. And Greenbelt, over the years, I think started in the early 70s was a place for contemporary Christian exploration. People would sing together they would talk about real world things like you and I mentioned and that's where we first became aware of John Bell was through some of the our church members in the UK who heard John speak at the early Greenbelt conferences. So anyway, this year, Joey and Andrew Bolton submitted a proposal for a meeting a part of that meeting to be what they called sing peace. And the whole Green Belt Conference was invited to come to this session and sing piece together and Joey put it together they they bought matching tshirts for everybody from the Community of Christ who were there. I think he told me there were 35 from the UK who came to support and he said on the rest, So the whole rest of the Mission Center was upholding the event in prayer. So it was very unifying for the Mission Center. And then those 35 folks then proceeded to tell stories about the songs, about their faith journey, about how the songs speak to their faith journey. And Joey produced a little booklet of songs that people could take home. And it included something about Community of Christ and what we believe and contact information if they wanted to know more. And I just think that is so cool that we continue to interact with each other. And John Bell was one of the speakers at Greenbelt this year. So it just is this wonderful convergence of message and mission that continues to bless us in amazing ways.

**Carla Long** 45:56

I, you know, I worked with Joey for three or four years and and I just love hearing, that someone who has was so intimately involved in the hymnal project continues to be so intimately involved, you know, I

think it might be easy. You guys worked on it for a long time. It might be easy after you publish it to say, To heck with this, I'm done with it. But you don't you continue to push it forward, and you continue to talk about it. And I just find that really refreshing.

**Jane Gardner** 46:24

So one of the huge amazing things from this summer, Carla was at the Hymn Society Conference, which this summer was in Dallas, Texas, and the Tuesday night session. The evening sessions at Hymn Society are always hymn sings. That's no surprise. And the Tuesday night session, Jan Kraybill, our organist in residence, Grammy nominated organist in residence.

**Carla Long** 46:52

Oh my gosh. it's so cool.

**Jane Gardner** 46:55

Yeah, she was just nominated on I think it was the 21st of November, the nominations came out. And so her last CD was nominated for Best Solo Classical Instrumental, so that's very cool. Anyway, Jan was asked to plan the hymn festival for that Tuesday night and wow, friends, and they were holding it at Meyerson Symphony Hall, which is Dallas's big Symphony Hall. And, and it was exciting. The Notre Dame Children's Choir was there. Jan worked really hard on it. And I hadn't seen it for a while, like she talked to me about it early on. But when we got to the hymn festival that night, it opened up the program. And one of the very first songs was Randall Pratt's "God Within, God Around" which is in our hymnal, number 20. Randall Pratt is a Community of Christ member who has written several texts for us. And David Bolton was the arranger. And the whole just think about this the Meyerson Symphony Hall full of people singing this song from our hymnal that had never been out there before. And Jan led them through it in an amazing way. And her playing that evening was just wonderful, as it always is, but just so, so much ministry that happened. But it was one of those oh my gosh, this is from our hymnal. This is from our denomination, nobody else has this song.

**Carla Long** 48:36

Yeah, exactly. It was. So were there other *Community of Christ Sings* hymns in there?

**Jane Gardner** 48:44

Sure. I mean, there's a lot of ones that we share with other hymnal. So I wouldn't have said it was specific, but the only one that was specifically written by Community of Christ, people was, was the "God Within, God Around" and she did it. It's a short refrain kind of song, or chorus. She did it offset with the story of creation, the African American poetry, which is this wonderful creation story. So they would, this narrator would tell part of the story, and then we would sing Randall's chorus and then they would tell us more of the story and they would sing Randall's chorus, and all the while Jan was changing the sound of things to match what was happening in the story of creation. It was just amazing.

**Carla Long** 49:33

Oh, that sounds very cool. She is She is just incredible. She's just incredible. We really are and I mean, she was incredible before she was nominated for a Grammy but that makes her even cooler in my mind. So I wanted to something we did talk about yesterday that I think is important to mention. I know

we're a little bit jumping around here, but we talked about how some of the hymns use scripture story. And I found that to be true. Like, I've always been surprised sometimes, well, sometimes I'm surprised. Sometimes I just feel like it's, you know, Kismet that when I'm preaching on a particular sermon that day or scripture that day or something, I find a hymn text that goes exactly along with it. And I kind of I love it. It doesn't always happen. Of course, we don't have scripture texts for all of our hymns. But can you talk a little bit about that? And what, what may be the, the basis behind that?

**Jane Gardner 50:35**

Yeah, in fact, the pool of songs that came into us for consideration was quite heavily, heavily populated with what I would call scripture, paraphrases. And so we had a lot of those, apparently, the writers, poets that are still living are writing quite a bit of paraphrase of Scripture stories. And so we more than we expected, we had opportunity to think about the Scripture story, what I noticed in that poetry for most of the ones that are included in our book, at least, there will be like two stanzas that are a paraphrase of the scripture, and then maybe a stanza or two that bring that scripture into today. So it makes the Scripture message or the idea from the Scripture story, relevant into what you might be experiencing right now in your life. So it isn't just about illuminating the Scripture. While I think that's very important, and some of them do that, obviously. But also, most of them go a step further and do some work in either applying or summarizing or saying, this is how this might affect us. And so that's another example, Carla of it being like real world. It's like, yes, it's scripture, but we're bringing it up to date. So one of the things, one of the songs I thought of when we were talking about that was "A Prophet Woman Broke a Jar," which is obviously prophetic, the woman breaking the jar of ointment and the discussion that ensued, because she was using that precious ointment. And so that that whole example, and there's others, there's "When Moses Tended Jethro's Sheep" is out there, and "A Mother Lined a Basket," the story of Moses. There's a wonderful one, "No Tramp of Soldiers Marching Feet." And that is a poem Sunday one that is just amazing. And each stanza talks about, behold your King. And as he's coming in on Palm Sunday, what does that mean that, you know, there were no soldiers with trampling feet during that, and then John Thornburg was is a Methodist minister. He was present at the Peace colloquy in 2013. We invited him to come and speak to the peace colloquy about our hymnal, as someone from the outside looking at our hymnal, and John was the one that kind of labeled our collection as gutsy, which I thought was an interesting word. In, in talking with him, he said, there are just so many hymnal committees who would not include many of these songs, they would be too difficult for congregations to handle. And so they just don't get included. Well, John has written one called "God, the Sculpture of the Mountains." And I love this one, because all the way through this is number 21. All the way through this song about God. He uses phrases that come from Scripture to describe who God is. And I've even used this text, this hymn text, with children to talk about, well, what's, what is this reference? What is this talking about? And so just some amazing, amazing images for God, like God, who is the potter, God who is the womb of creation, God who is the nuisance to Pharaoh. So it's referencing lots of different Scripture all in his one hymn. So very, very fun and ways of using In Scripture and song, I think that is pretty important. It's that ongoing voice of scripture that says, This isn't just something that happened in the past, this has an application and a meaning for today, prophetically.

**Carla Long 55:16**

Absolutely, and, and you've named so many good ones, I wanted to throw one in myself. Last Easter, we sang number 478, "Woman Weeping in the Garden." And it was just perfect. You know, when you know those moments were right after the sermon and, and the person who's preaching talks about women and their importance in the Easter story, and then you sing this, and it just adds that perfect little thing right after. And it just, it just seals that I don't remember every hymn that we sing and Community of Christ, but I remember a few of them. And that one was really, really touching for me.

**Jane Gardner** 55:52

Well, that's a perfect opportunity and segue, Carla, for you to talk about your podcast that you did with the author and composer of that song who was Aaron Damon.

**Carla Long** 56:03

Yeah, he was incredible. And, and I love that he also wrote 636 You have called "I Have Called You by Your Name." Yeah. And he talked about how the third verse when or the third stanza of "When a Woman Reaches Out to Touch Jesus's Robe." He wrote that for his own ordination. And he said, faith is a choice. And sometimes I forget when I'm singing these hymns that these hymns were not only carefully carefully chosen for our hymnal, but carefully carefully written by real people in real situations, living their real lives. And so now every time I sing that song, I think about how faith is a choice, and we need to choose it. Probably every single day of our lives, we need to choose it. And so that was so meaningful to me to hear the author of the hymn speak to that. No wonder you love going to the Hymn Society? Well, yeah,

**Jane Gardner** 56:59

so get we get to know people that are just amazing ministers on their own. Well, and I was referring to your podcast, Episode 221, which is *Community of Christ Sings* at graduate theological union in Berkeley, California. So Dan Damon and Nancy Hall were two professors at this Berkeley University using our hymnal two as the textbook for a class on hymns in peace and justice.

**Carla Long** 57:29

Which still blows my mind blows my mind. And and you talked a little bit yesterday about it during that podcast we talked about "Till All the Jails Are Empty" back to Carl Daw. And and you wrote to him after that podcast, was that right?

**Jane Gardner** 57:43

That's right. Well, and Carl was the author of "Till All the Jails Are Empty," which is number 303. And I thought it would be good for him to just hear what Dan Damon and Nancy Hall had to say in your interview, because quite a bit, was said about that him in your interview with them. But you also personally, Carla talked about "Till All the Jails Are Empty," being very applicable to your situation at the time with immigration and difficulties that either the country or your local area was having does that?

**Carla Long** 58:25

Absolutely. Yeah. We were writing letters to the detainees, the people who are being held at the border, and we sang that song, and it was there were lots of tears.



**Jane Gardner** 58:36

I took the link of your podcast and I sent it to Carl. And I said, Carl, I think you'll want to listen to this and and hear what they have to say about "Till All the Jails Are Empty." And then he wrote back to me, and here's what he said, How very kind of Utah let me know of this podcast. It was really good to hear Nancy and Dan's familiar voices. And I was deeply touched to hear such appreciation of "Till All the Jails Are Empty." I was especially moved to hear how Carla's congregation used it in connection with the ongoing situation with detainees at the southern border. When I wrote those words, 24 years ago, I could not have imagined how painfully relevant they would become. I'm so grateful that your hymnal makes them available to people now. That's what he wrote.

**Carla Long** 59:34

Well, that's making me tear up again twice on this interview so far, Jane twice. It it really I really think it speaks to what a community can be birthed from a hymnal and I think that you and your hymnal team just did, over and above an incredible job building this hymnal for us and I know it was a labor of love. I know it was hard.

**Jane Gardner** 59:58

Well, it was a labor of love. It was was also Spirit filled. So all of us on the team would testify to that, that it wasn't necessarily our, our doing. But we felt very, very blessed in the process by lots of people and, and the Holy Spirit. So that's an important part of it. That's the other way that you hope to stay prophetic with the voice. That kind of yearnings toward the horizon. With whatever is coming, you're hoping we're going to be able to sing our way there.

**Carla Long** 1:00:36

Absolutely. And well, Jane we've come to pretty much close to the podcast or pretty close to the end. I was wondering if there's anything that you wanted to say or you wanted me to ask, and I didn't ask before we before we close off?

**Jane Gardner** 1:00:51

No, I think you did a wonderful job.

**Carla Long** 1:00:55

I think you did a wonderful job.

**Jane Gardner** 1:00:58

I just think it is so important to keep in our forefront of we're going to sing into our prophetic people role in this world. And singing is going to help us get there.

**Carla Long** 1:01:13

I absolutely agree. Especially with books. Like an hymnal is like you have made you and your team have made so thank you so much for your hard work. Thank you so much for sharing all of these awesome stories with us. I I just can't wait to talk to people about these stories after we put this podcast

out. I can't wait to talk about them. So thank you again, and I really appreciate you and all the hard work that you've done.

**Jane Gardner** 1:01:36

Thanks for the opportunity to Carla.

**Josh Mangelson** 1:01:46

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