

Say What? | World Conference Worship

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

World Conference, worship, spiritual director, cultural representation, worship planning, spiritual practices, communion, global church, diversity, creativity, intentionality.

SPEAKERS

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam, Kassie Ripsam, Tyler Marz

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 00:29

Hello and welcome to Say What?, where we ask the questions that make us say, "Say What?" I'm Mary Ann

Kassie Ripsam 00:36

And I'm Kassie...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 00:38

And today we're interviewing Tyler Marz, about the Conference worship services. First, we have a few getting to know you questions. Okay, do you think you would survive a zombie apocalypse?

Tyler Marz 00:51

What a great question. You know, I don't think about zombie apocalypse very often, but to be honest, I think I would survive for a while. I'm really good at retreating and running away and hiding, but I think once they discovered me, I wouldn't put up a fight. I'd be a goner.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:15

So are you an introvert? [Tyler nods] That's what I thought, because that sounds like Kassie.

Tyler Marz 01:26

I think I am probably the true definition of an ambivert, which is someone who is introverted around people that I don't know, and extroverted around people that I do know. So, if I'm in a comfortable space, but if I, if you know, so zombies, I don't know them. If that, yeah, I'm gonna run around.

Kassie Ripsam 01:46

No, no.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:48

Yeah. What part of a driver's test do you think you would most likely fail or do poorly in?

Tyler Marz 01:55

Um, I'd have to say it's probably parallel parking. That is one of those things I just avoid, and so I'm not very skilled at it.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 02:04

You're with a very large group of people there, me included, it would just freak me out.

Kassie Ripsam 02:14

So, um, do you ever like talk to inanimate objects like laptops, furniture and anything.

Tyler Marz 02:29

Yeah, so I do on occasion, it's generally only with electronics, and when they're not doing what I need them to do, like the internet isn't working, or something's malfunctioning on my phone, or Facebook is down, something like that. You know, then I'll be like, Why aren't you working?

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 02:53

I feel like when we're having strong emotions towards things, is to like we tend to talk to them more.

Kassie Ripsam 03:00

I'm just generally polite to inanimate objects.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:03

There's Kassie, who apologizes to chairs that she bumps into and everything,

Kassie Ripsam 03:09

Not just chairs. I mean, honestly, if I drop something, I apologize to it. I'm just polite to them.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:18

If you could have any pet in the world. What would it be and why?

Tyler Marz 03:24

So, I would have a golden retriever. I think they are the most beautiful dogs in the entire world. I don't currently have one, but if I could, I would.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:36

Yeah, they're like, the they're like one of the goofiest dogs in the entire universe, too.

Tyler Marz 03:45

They are.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:46

So, now some questions about your bio. What is your favorite thing to bake?

Tyler Marz 03:52

You know, that's a great question. I would say, Okay, I have to pick three things. I'm sorry.

Kassie Ripsam 04:04

No, it's alright.

Tyler Marz 04:06

So let's see. My most favorite dessert that I don't bake very often is called pavlova. So it's kind of a fancy dessert that is like baked meringue, and so it gets, yeah, crispy on the outside and marshmallowy in the middle. And then you eat it with whipped cream and lots of fresh fruit. It is the most delicious thing in the entire world. And then, if I'm really cold chocolate, oh, sorry, go ahead.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 04:38

No, I'm just sounds really good.

Tyler Marz 04:41

It's delicious. Um, and then if I'm really craving chocolate, it's either brownies or chocolate chip cookies. I'm kind of a purist when it comes to my chocolate desserts. So ...

Kassie Ripsam 04:56

Does your family have something that they like when you bake?

Tyler Marz 05:00

Make, um so not so much. When I bake, they do request every time I come home to visit. They love it when I make homemade mac and cheese, like the baked kind.

Kassie Ripsam 05:16

That's lovely. Honestly, it's ...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 05:19

I love it when the tea, when the cheese. We put a lot of cheese on top, and it gets really toasty and crispy.

Kassie Ripsam 05:27

So could you tell us about your masters in arts and religion and how that has affected your ministry?

Tyler Marz 05:34

Yeah, that is a really good question. So, I have my masters of religion from Graceland University. Some of us may have heard of that, a great school, a great school for for learning about Christianity and how that and ministry in general. And so I would say I learned a lot of things in my master's program, I learned how to look at the Bible and theology with a lens of understanding, trying to look at things within the context that they were written. That really important when we look at the Bible, and it's also really helped my understanding of the Old Testament, which can be kind of confusing for a lot of people, so I really appreciated my Old Testament class in the things that it taught me. And then I would say lastly, and probably most importantly, is that it didn't teach me everything, though, but what it did teach me is where to find the answers to questions, or how to ask the right questions to find the answers. So, I

mean, obviously the Bible or Christianity or spirituality, there is a whole host of things that you can learn about and dive into and get lost for forever in trying to understand. And so, when you do a program like a master's program, you, you know, you can only learn so much, right? But it develops this desire to keep learning and finding out and asking the questions and and learning things. So it creates a curiosity.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 07:20

Yeah, it was really important just to learn, like, where to find the answers, and not just kind of depend on just what you've learned then, but kind of be able to build on it.

Tyler Marz 07:31

Yeah,

Kassie Ripsam 07:33

we did some research and found out you are in Harmony. What do you do with harmony?

Tyler Marz 07:38

Yes, so, that is slightly old information. I used to be on the board of Harmony, and this was actually during a pretty pivotal time for them. It was when they were transitioning from GALA, the organization, to Harmony. So, they had a name change and the structure and the things they did as an organization kind of combined and shifted and put some more emphasis on things. And so, when I was serving on their board of directors, I was what's called a member at large. So, I participated in several different aspects of their organization. In helping them with things, I worked a bit on their welcoming and affirming program, supporting the person who was leading that a bit. I also assisted in the nominations committee. So, every year they hold elections, and they need a committee of people to kind of spearhead what how that process works, and gathering all the information so they can send that out to the members and the voting and all of those different things. And then, I also worked with the chaplain at the time on Sacred Pause, which is their worship service that happens monthly. That was something that it was actually started during my time on the board, not by me, but by someone else, but I assisted them. So, it was largely during the pandemic when we were really wanting to create a safe space and a community for people who just felt so disconnected during that time, and it has stuck around and continues to this day.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 09:29

So what does a spiritual director do?

Tyler Marz 09:34

Good question. So, yes, fellow listeners, I am a trained spiritual director. Some of you may have heard of that before. Some of you maybe haven't. And so, a spiritual director, the title is a little bit of a misnomer. So, you might think that a spiritual director is someone who directs people spiritually, you know, tells them what to believe. That is super far from the truth and what we actually do. So spiritual directors are working one on one with individuals, or sometimes in a small group, but typically it's one on one, and they're helping that other person, they're companioning with them to notice where the Spirit is directing them in their life. So, another term that is often used for spiritual directors is a spiritual

companion. They're not always synonymous, because sometimes they use different skills or things like that, but the main emphasis that is that we are companioning with people to help see where the spirit or the divine or God is moving in their lives, we're companions on their spiritual journey. And with that also means that I have certain training to be able to offer that to people. So, I have gone to school, and I have a graduate certificate in spiritual direction, which gives me the skills and tools I need to accompany people in that way.

Kassie Ripsam 11:11

That is incredibly interesting. [Yeah],

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 11:13

I love the one on one. Smith,

Kassie Ripsam 11:16

So, what kinds of things are you planning for the 2025 World Conference Switching into the worship stuff.

Tyler Marz 11:23

Yeah, that's a good question. So I, along with Karin Peter, who you maybe have heard of, her and I are working together on planning all of the worship services for a World Conference. So there are seven worship services during that weekend and week, and so that is my main focus. I also serve on the Moments of Blessing Team, which is a team of individuals that has planned and prepared for whatever sorts of moments might come up during a legislative session. So, sometimes things can get kind of tense when people are talking, or new information is shared that might be surprising to people, or we might have like a super amazing and joyous thing that's shared. And so, we're a team of people that meets together, and sometimes we might be called on during a legislative session to offer a prayer or a song or a blessing or lead people in a spiritual practice as a way to kind of focus and center ourselves during that time. For the worship services. Though, again, we have those seven worship services, and Karin and I have spent nearly an entire year at this point working on crafting those services.

Kassie Ripsam 12:53

So what parts of the worships take the longest to plan out?

Tyler Marz 12:59

Everything! No, that's so interestingly, some parts of the services are planned by Karin and myself, and other parts are written by other people. So for instance, like we might ask someone to give a sermon during one of the services, all we are doing is inviting a person to do that, but they are going to spend all the time writing their sermon, thinking about every word and how it might fit in with the service, and how people might hear it and receive it. So, there are some aspects of it that are simple and that we are finding individuals to do certain parts of it. Other parts we are having to craft and develop a script that will be used during a certain part of the service or a spiritual practice, or things like that. So, while there isn't necessarily one specific thing that takes the longest, every bit of it is really intentionally thought about. So...

Kassie Ripsam 14:04

Yeah, that does make sense. It's it's a lot to try and think about it like there's a large diverse group of people that you want to think about when you're trying to plan out what we're going to do, what are some of the activities?

Tyler Marz 14:23

That is another really good question. So, each worship service, it depends on which day of the week the worship service is happening. So, for World Conference, five out of our seven worship services are going to be ordination services. So, whether that's, pending approved legislation from the delegate body of the church, we will potentially be ordaining and setting apart a new Prophet/President of our church, six new apostles, two new presidents of 70, two new members of the First Presidency, and the Presiding Evangelist. Those are a lot of people, and every worship service that we plan for those and for all the others is carefully thought about to give the most intention to those special sacraments that we have in the church.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 15:19

So, how many people start on the worship planning team? What role of diversity is included in planning? Yeah,

Tyler Marz 15:26

so interestingly, there are only two of us on the worship planning team, Karin and myself. Now, of course, we are not doing all the parts of the worship service, but we are coordinating and planning and asking people to take part in different parts of the worship. And so, that's where the diversity comes in, because we know that we are a global faith that has people in all corners of the earth. And so, we want to make sure that they are represented in some way, that their culture, their music, there are languages that they speak in that all of those are represented as best as we can in a worship service. Of course, we have more people than we do worship services or places to participate, but we do our best to hear from new people every Conference and every worship service, so we can hear some of those languages and the music dance, even from different places. That sounds like a lot for you and Karin, honestly. It is, but you know what? It is so much fun. It is so fun to to plan each service, and then to look over and see, how can we make this one better or different or more unique than the last service that we just did? And so we are really intentional about every moment of Conference so that it has variety and excitement and contemplation and spirituality, and we're mindful of our senses, right?, the things we see and we hear and even that we might do with our hands or that we might say out loud, we're mindful of all of that.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 17:18

Big thing is being mindful about even the way you feel during some during what's happening. Yeah, they might.

Kassie Ripsam 17:26

We're expressive. As an American, we tend to be expressive. And that's, that's that might come across as offensive some of the things I tend to do.

Tyler Marz 17:40

Yeah, so that's, I think that speaks a little bit to one of our enduring principles, right, of of unity and diversity, right, that we, that we we see beauty in the complexity that is our church and those expressions and mannerisms and the the songs that we sing and the kind of rhythms that we use, and all of that. So

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 18:06

Yeah, what are some of the behind the scenes things that people that happen during worship that most people don't know about?

Tyler Marz 18:15

So I would say one of those big ones there. There are many things, believe it or not, but one of those has to do with copyright of all of our music that we sing or listen to during Conference so in the world that we live in, especially when we are streaming music or recording things or even just doing an in-person, event that is recorded for our own use is that we have to have permission for all the music, all the hymns that we sing that includes the music, part of it, right, the accompaniment, but also the lyrics. And sometimes we hold the copyright for those things because they're stuff that we have written, or members of the church have written, and other times they are songs that are shared by other churches. And so, we have to reach out and get permission for every single hymn that we print in our conference hymnal, that we sing and that we that we perform. So, like even if one of our organists is playing a piece of music, we have to get permission for that to be played and recorded. So, that is quite a tedious process. A related bit of that is that we try to have all of our hymns translated into three languages that we are doing that we will be singing during World Conference. So, that's English, Spanish and French. And sometimes we like to add new songs that we haven't translated before. So we have to reach out to special people who not only have skills in speaking those languages, but also can sing in those languages, because being able to translate something word for word, versus being able to translate something that is singable is different, and so we reach out to certain special people to help us with that. And that takes a lot of time and a lot of effort, so that our people that are coming from Africa or French speaking Canada, or various parts of the world in Central and South America, are able to sing hymns in a language that's comfortable for them.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 20:31

Yeah. Honestly, that kind of reminds me the other interview that we did, one of our first ones. We were talking about the creative commons license, the things you mentioned.

Kassie Ripsam 20:42

What kinds of events do you plan worships for? Or is it just the World Conference?

Tyler Marz 20:48

Yeah. So, while my life is totally consumed with planning worship services for World Conference right now, I also assist in planning worship resources for the global church. So we, you might be familiar with some of those worship helps that have come out in previous years, where you can you know in previous weeks, where you can see what to do for a worship service that's happening in your

congregation. So, I help work on those resources and new resources that we are creating for the church. So, there are groups that meet and worship in a way or gather in a way that's different than maybe your traditional congregation, and so we are working currently to develop some resources that would be helpful for them, that they can use in the different ways that they're gathering, that might not look like your traditional worship service that happens on a Sunday. So I help with putting together those things.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 21:56

That's really cool. Yeah, so like, is it like a special process you have to go through for that? Or is that like...?

Tyler Marz 22:06

Yeah, so it has been in developing this program of putting all of this together. We're still working on that, but there was a bit of a special project. So we took some time and listened to people from across the church in what was, what they appreciated about worship, service, helps and resources that they had some things they wish they could have, some things that they maybe wished were more accessible. And so, it started out by listening to people and then seeing okay, how can we meet some of these needs? We also recognize that increasingly, there are groups in the church that are wanting resources that think about spirituality in new and fresh ways, that think about theology in ways that's maybe more contemporary or applies to some situations that they might be going through. And so, we are creating a team we're still in the process of doing that of different people that are creative in different ways, for finding like poetry or prayers or activities or discussions that can be spiritual, and talk about those kinds of things, but also look at it in new and exciting ways that maybe are a little bit different than they've used to or seen before. Yeah, good question.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 23:39

What is the most difficult part of planning worship services for World Conference?

Tyler Marz 23:47

I would say I'm going to change this question just slightly, is it? Maybe it's not the most difficult, but it is the most tedious, so it requires like the most detail, and that would have to be our script writing that we have to do. So, this could also be one of those behind the scenes things that we don't know. So, for World Conference, because we have translators, and we translate just about every bit of the service into both Spanish and French, or from those languages to English is that every part of our worship service has to have a script. It has to have something that's written, written down about it. So, that means the people that say prayers, the talks or sermons that are given, if there is a spiritual practice, if there's a disciple generous response moment, if there are other bits that are shared or said during a service, all of those have to be written down, every single word so that that ...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 24:53

Sorry, I'll, I'll say, I wondered how you guys like translated that.

Tyler Marz 24:57

Yeah. And so, while we do have, Um, sometimes there are moments where things aren't written down. And so we have translators who are amazingly skilled and can translate in the moment, but when you are having to translate for such lengthy periods of time, it's really helpful to have something written down so that you can reference that as you're translating as well. And so, it's an amazingly complex part of conference that happens that I get, I cannot give enough kudos to our translators who do that, because it is demanding work, but it is very tedious because there are those people that have to write down the things they're going to say. There are those people that have to read them, those people that have to translate them. And so it is a very detailed process.

Kassie Ripsam 25:47

Yeah, I bet it is, I remember last World Conference watching this, honestly, really skilled ASL translator, like they just their hands flying all over the place and like, how is she going that fast and keeping up?

Tyler Marz 26:06

Yeah, if you ever sit in a legislative session, I hope you'll have the opportunity to do that this year, or maybe you have in the past, but they have a little a ding a bell that they ring when individuals are speaking too fast. So during legislative session, right, legislation is presented before the church, so things are being said, and then people can go up to mics and respond to them, and sometimes they speak too fast for the translators. And so, there's a little bell that they ring that sounds over the entire Conference chamber and signals to the person speaking to slow down, because the translators, whether ASL or Spanish or French, can't, can't keep up with the pace of their talk. So,

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 26:58

Yeah, I remember like when conversation got really heated the brief time that I was able to get up there, like they kept saying, You gotta slow down. It was so it was irritating but kind of funny at the same time.

Kassie Ripsam 27:15

So, what has brought you the most joy while planning worship for the Conference?

Tyler Marz 27:21

I would have to say it's bringing bringing the experiences to life. So, I would say every part of World Conference, whether it's worship service or otherwise, everyone who's planning or doing involved in some way is extremely intentional about what they're doing, and that is especially true with worship services. So Karin and I, as we work through each worship service, we're mindful that we have representation from various places around the church, that we are hearing different languages, that we are singing songs that aren't just in English, but in Spanish and in French and in other languages even, that we are using our senses. You know, the sound, speaking, using our hands, the things we might see, you know, visual sorts of things. We're mindful of, the colors and just a whole host of things, and all of that is where the creativity comes in, where we can see maybe, How do I represent this? Instead of saying words, you know, to describe something, how might I demonstrate this, whatever part it might be in the service in a different way, either through song or through dance. Surprise, surprise. We have a children's dance troupe that is coming and will be performing us, for us during a worship service

towards the end of World Conference. So, it's the intentionality and the creativity in thinking. How can we bring our theme of "Hope is Here" to life each and every day in new ways.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 29:11

That's really awesome. I was going to ask if there was anything that you guys were planning to do that hasn't been done in a worship service like in Conference.

Tyler Marz 29:24

Oh, that's a good question. Let me think of something. One thing that we're trying to do is we will be doing a spiritual practice every day of World Conference during our worship service. And in the past, those often have been done with like a person getting up on the rostrum and leading us in that practice. This time, we are going to do those spiritual practices as videos. So, we have an amazingly talented videographer who also has a huge passion for spiritual practice, and is crafting spiritual practices that are videos for people to see and also listen to, to follow along with. So, that is something that is totally different. We had one of those air last year during Easter that was put out by the church, and we thought that would be a fun thing to do during every day of World Conference this year. So, that's one.

Kassie Ripsam 30:29

Yes. So, for those of our listeners who might be joining World Conference via online, what what do you think would help them best be able to prepare for the worship experiences?

Tyler Marz 30:46

So I would say two of those things are intentionally setting aside time to watch. So I know some people who might be listening might not be in a time zone that's particularly convenient for them to watch, but I would totally encourage them to set aside some time to watch those worship services, because again, we will be having many ordinations happening, and those are pivotal moments in the life of our church, and you won't want to miss that. I would say the second thing is that, one of the beautiful things we have within our denomination is the ability to partake of communion, not only in person, but online. And so, if they're watching online, they are more than welcome to partake of communion with us as an entire global church, as 1000s of people gather in person and online in sacrament together. And you can take that time for yourself, to prepare your bread and your juice, or whatever it is that you use for communion, to sit down and to take that with everyone else. And what, what a neat opportunity that is.

Kassie Ripsam 32:02

It is. It's beautiful. I love the way it was done last year too.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 32:08

Different kinds of the crackers. And yes,

Tyler Marz 32:12

You'll get some of that again this year.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 32:17

Last question, if you could have coffee with anyone alive or dead? Who would it be, and what would you talk about?

Tyler Marz 32:26

Mm, so there are, I've answered this question. People have asked me this over the years, and each time someone asked me, I think of someone different. And so this time, my choice is a woman named Julia Child. Some of you might know her, some of you might not, but she was a rather significant Cook, a chef, if you will, who lived during kind of a, sort of a pivotal time in the world, just shortly after World War Two, and her and her husband were stationed in France. He was working for the government, and she was an American who didn't know how to navigate French cuisine for American people, and so she set out on this task of learning how to cook French food, but then also explaining it in a way that anyone could cook. And she has such a love and a passion for food. If you ever have seen little clips of her, maybe she's had TV shows over the years. Of course, she since has passed on but she has she talks about food in a way that makes you hungry. It makes you want to eat it. She just has such a passion for it. And I just think it would be so fun to sit down and have coffee, maybe have some sort of fancy French pastry, and talk about all the food that she loves.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 34:00

That sounds amazing. It really does. I remember hearing about her briefly going to museum one time.

Kassie Ripsam 34:09

All of this talk of food is making me hungry. So, thank you for being willing to talk about the Conference with us. Mr. Tyler, course. Um so. And thank you all for listening. Remember, you can give suggestions in the comments. You can find all of our episodes at projectzionpodcast.org under the Say What series. And thank you for being, remember to put on your full armor of God and walk in peace. Thank you again.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 34:43

Thank you for listening and thank you for being here again.

Tyler Marz 34:47

Thank you.