

Chai Can't Even | Kara Sherman (Pensacola, FL)

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Graceland, young adult, campgrounds, outreach, community, youth group, hospitality, traditions, camp, Christ

SPEAKERS

Blake Smith, Kara Sherman

Blake Smith 00:26

Hello and welcome to Chai Can't Even, a Project Zion Podcast series where we chat with young adults about life, faith, struggles, and joys, and why they choose to stay active in Community of Christ. I'm Blake Smith, and I'm your host for this episode. And I'm here with a friend of mine and a member of the North Pensacola congregation. Her name is Kara Sherman. And I'm just really excited to get a chance to sit down and talk with her. So welcome, Kara.

Kara Sherman 00:54

Thank you!

Blake Smith 00:57

So, we like to start off each of these episodes, Kara, with giving our guests a chance to tell a little bit about themselves so our listeners can get to know you better. So, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Kara Sherman 01:08

Yeah, so I'm Kara Sherman. I know you already introduced me. My maiden name is Goodwin. I actually am from Pensacola and I was born and raised there. I really am from Cantonment. But it's pretty much a Pensacola area. Nobody else is going to know where Cantonment is if you didn't live in the Pensacola. I'm a young adult in the Alabama Northwest Florida Mission Center. And we have quite a few parts in the Mission Center leadership team, things like that. We have a big part in our congregation. And I bet you're wondering that since we live, not you Blake, but the listeners. I bet you're wondering if you heard Florida, if we live near Disney. And that's the most common question that I got when I attended Graceland was oh, you live you're from Florida. Why would you come here you live by Disney. But we do attend Disney regularly. We have annual passes, so we go probably like four or five times a year to about seven hours door to door. We also like to go on Disney cruises. And then I have a, we have a two and a half year old. She'll be three in October. Her name is Noah Kate and she is probably the star of the show as far as family and our congregation. I met my husband in the church and I met him at our campgrounds which is Bluff Springs Campground. We met there. We got married there. And, we still attend there very regularly. I think that's mostly everything I can think of about me.

Blake Smith 02:50

Oh, I'm learning something new about you. I did not know that you guys were such big Disney fans. My family likes Disney. But my answer to that was always know it's about eight hours from where I live. It's not really that close. I think as a child, we maybe went there twice total. So. I do know some others who make it a regular thing. I don't think I know anybody who goes four or five times a year. So that's awesome. And I have met Noah Kate, so I understand why she's the star of the show. She is an absolute Princess, so and a good friend of my great nephew, I believe. so I think they they're pretty good friends so. Well, Kara, it's really great to have you with us. So we're just gonna, I just want to hear your story. And I'll have some questions for you as we go along. But maybe if you could just start out and tell us what life was like for you as a child growing up in the church.

Kara Sherman 03:54

So this is where I fit into two different categories as far as being a lifelong member and also being somebody, or mostly lifelong member, and somebody who, at some point converted. So I so I'll take a second to tell you if that's okay. So I started off in the Methodist church, my great grandparents attended very regularly. And my family has about five generations of military. So they attended everywhere they lived. When they moved to Pensacola, they attended one right down the road from them and my mom worked there. So when I was little, I attended there, and then when I was about in think I was in first or second grade, my aunt and some may know her she was she was Trisha Nelson. And then Townson or Sodden was her last name, and her, and her children attended. And, she wanted me to go to reunion with them. And so I was in first or second grade, first time I'd ever really been away from mom and dad. And I go to reunion, I don't really remember much about the reunion that I attended. Except I know I felt loved. And I know I stuck a bead up my nose and had to have the nurse, in the camp grounds, come and get this beat out of my nose, so I didn't have to go home or go to the doctor. And so I did not even start attending a congregation regularly until I was in fifth or sixth grade. [Okay] So, going to church was totally different for me, because my first experience was reunion as a very young child. So I don't I do remember my time in the Methodist church, but not like I remember my time in Community of Christ. So I ...

Blake Smith 05:58

Was that reunion at Bluff Springs campgrounds?

Kara Sherman 06:01

It was okay. It was at Bluff Springs, but as a young child going, so I, we had a leader in our congregation that came in and he was he had really, I would say, had beefed up our youth group. And so I had fallen right before, so I was too young to attend the youth group. And then whenever I was able, sorry, as I got old enough to attend the youth group, he had been able or him and his wife ended up moving to Iowa. So, so we didn't really get to see that. But we got to see the results of the youth group that he built up at North Pensacola. So when I first started going, we had about, it was pretty regular about 60 kids, that was a thing. And North Pensacola has an old section of the church and a new section of the church. And the old section is what we call the youth building. And so it's got a, it's where the old sanctuary was before they built on the new part. And so that whole building was filled with children of all ages. And so, as time went on, the community that was in it was right next to a

middle school. So it attracted a lot of kids, because they would cut through the fence. And eventually, I think the minister at the time, or the youth pastor at the time was able to attract them with, you know, something to eat after school, things like that. He offered homework programs just to come up there and somebody to talk about their homework. And the area of town, I wouldn't say it's a bad area, it just has little sections that aren't, I guess, ideal living conditions for some children. So we kind of started getting a rougher crowd. And so those are my earliest memories of coming to a youth group as having 60 kids, and they had to finally come up with some rules to make sure there was order in place because it was loud and chaotic. And but it was, it was definitely a fun way to enter into a church, especially coming from a Methodist church that had all kinds of programs. And, you know, every youth class had its own age group. Sometimes we were split into two classes, but depending on the age group, so it was a good, easy transition to start coming to North Pensacola from the Methodist Church.

Blake Smith 08:45

Well, that that's really great, because so many of our congregations are lucky to have a handful of kids. So yeah, that would that would be a lot of energy and a lot of fun.

08:55

It was, I guess over time, it did start to I guess, the group started to weed off because there were a lot of rules in place, because there were a lot of things that with that many kids exploring different parts of their life. Of course, these different kids started getting into things that they shouldn't have. And they were bringing it into the church and getting violent things like that, not towards people but towards the walls and the doors and so they had to put in some rules in place. So over time, it kind of weeded out some of those that were only coming for the wrong reasons. [Gotcha.] So it did dwindle down. Once I got into probably late middle school, early high school It dwindled down to about four or five of us regularly attending in all age groups. So it went from like 60+, and I think there were more before I started the youth group, like being able to get into middle school because there was a whole different section if you were in elementary school. [Right] And then it started, there were about four or five that regularly attended after this timeframe.

Blake Smith 10:08

Okay. All right. And so what was your involvement in the congregation as you got to high school? And as this group kind of dwindled down a little bit, and there were fewer of you a little more, perhaps a little more attention on the individuals that were there? What was what was your role? How did the congregation treat you? And where, how did you find your place? Or where did you find your place in the congregation?

Kara Sherman 10:36

So I did not add in the previous one. But as I was coming in a bit, there were like two people that really just made me feel like I was part of the family as soon as I walked in, and one of those is actually your sister Blake, which, and he her daughter, Brittany. So Brittany attached to me, probably because I'm a few years older than her. So she attached to me immediately because Brittany was very into cheerleading. And I was a cheerleader at the time. And so I was able to find a place immediately coming, the first time I ever attended, they made me feel at home, and then there was Rob Donofrio. He took me in and like, gave me the biggest hug and treated me like I was one of his kids for the whole

time I attended and I didn't really, I was a very shy kid. So I would talk to you if I knew you. But I was just I observed the situations at hand.

Blake Smith 11:37

An interesting mix a shy kid who was a cheerleader.

Kara Sherman 11:41

Oh, yeah. And as an adult, I'm kind of what you would consider an extroverted introvert so I can be extroverted if I need to. But at the end of the day, I'm going to need some time to recover from it.

Blake Smith 11:54

Makes sense.

Kara Sherman 11:56

As, when I got into high school, I still attended North Pensacola, but I kind of explored a lot of our other congregations within the Mission Center. So a big one that I started attending whatever I was, early in high school was Crestview. They had a very thriving youth group at the time. And I think they still have a pretty big youth group or youth coming and going into that congregation. And I had become very close with the Goodson/Shaw family. And so they were coming and picking me up. And they were taking me to church with them. And then they would take me to a movie with them because they did like a Sunday Movie. So we'd go to the movie theater, and then they would take me back home. And it was something that made me feel so special that these people from Crestview would come get me from Pensacola, take me to church, take me to a movie, and probably something to eat. And then we would go back home. It was something that made me feel very special in high school. And then in college, I actually attended Graceland for two years. I attended in the years of 2012 or 2012 to 2014. And so I did regularly attend. I think now at Graceland there's not Sunday services or or I think it's Afterglow only, but I attended during the afterglow only, I think, yeah. Okay. So I attended at the time, we had a regular Sunday service in the morning. And then we had a afterglow in the evening. So I attended both of those pretty regularly. And then I was part of the CCLP program, which is, now they have a different name for it, but it was the Community of Christ Leadership Program at Graceland, so I was able to be a part of a lot of different groups with that. And so I was able to explore a lot of congregations in the Mission Center, around Lamoni and Kansas City, those Mission Centers, so it was really fun to go see other congregations, other dynamics, because it's so different than what I'm used to. I'm used to be, I'm used to the hospitality of the South, no matter where you walk in, and they always talk about it being so different up north, but then you walked into a congregation out there, and it was the same as being at home. So it was a very different experience for me. It wasn't like, "let me take you home and cook you dinner," but it was still Community of Christ.

Blake Smith 14:37

Sure that's good to hear? Yeah. So as one who comes from the south and has been in the Midwest and Kansas City and Lamoni and Kirtland and now Chicago, I would say that's, that's pretty standard, but it's good to hear that someone else has had that experience. Hospitality is a little different, yeah, than in the south, but times have changed as well. So...

Kara Sherman 15:05

And then whenever I was at Graceland, I got this call from, so my mom did not join our church until I think she joined in like 2013 or 2014. So it was, well after I was a part of the church, and I got a call from her because she ended up going to church one day when I was at Graceland, and they had, they were having a business meeting, and I had no idea but they had set aside a scholarship fund for me, for Graceland, and I hadn't known about it or anything else. And she was like, it was one of her first big impressions of she called me and was like, Oh, my goodness, Kara, did you know that you have a scholarship fund at North Pensacola? And I was like, What are you talking about? And so it really just, it was something very special to her. So, North Pensacola, and Community of Christ in general, is just something that's very, very special to me and my mom and had a lot of experiences with feeling part of the community there.

Blake Smith 16:07

So did you attend with your aunt? Or were you attending alone? I know you said for a while, like the Crestview gang was coming and getting you and taking you there. But when you were attending in North Pensacola, were you attending with your aunt? Or was that just something you were doing on your own from your time in the youth group?

Kara Sherman 16:26

So, my aunt attended regularly from the time she kind of started off and came home. It's I went there a few times. But it was I was so young, I don't really remember that one. And then she switched over to North Pensacola. And they went until I think I was in eighth grade. And then they moved to Fort Walton Beach. So they couldn't attend any longer. They still attended the congregation there before it shut down. But I did attend with her. And then once, I started with I had, so my aunt has, she had three kids of her own, and then she also ended up having the opportunity to take in her three nieces. And well, her two nieces and a nephew. And so that was kind of like a Brady Bunch situation where they had a mixed family. And so she ended up with six kids. And so I just kind of fell in with them. So at first it wasn't like I was enmeshed in the whole Community of Christ. Atmosphere, because I had six cousins that I could go to at any point to be my friend, your own youth group? Oh, yeah, they were. And so we attended with her until she moved. And then as she moved, I would, my mom would take me but she wouldn't go in. So she would just wait car. And then as time went on, she'd come in for like, she would come in to the church to eat, and then she'd get back to her car. And it wasn't that she wasn't... She wanted me to have my own space, she didn't want to invade in my religious journey. So she wanted to make sure that I had a separate safe space away from what she wanted. So she kind of let me choose the path when she was working.

Blake Smith 18:18

Go ahead. Go ahead.

Kara Sherman 18:19

Go ahead, you're good.

Blake Smith 18:20

Well, was she attending still the Methodist church or...

18:25

She had gone through a rough time in her life. So she had kind of, she kind of went were to a time that she just didn't attend any church, literally, but she didn't. She was still spiritual. She just was not practicing in [Sure] the Methodist church.

Blake Smith 18:43

I just didn't know if you were in a household that that was attending to different traditions. That was kind of what I was, was asking.

Kara Sherman 18:51

No, I mean, she she did not join for a long time and she would attend wherever but she had had a rough time at the Methodist Church towards the end.

Blake Smith 19:01

Okay. So, you went away to Graceland. You were there for two years. And then you returned to Pensacola. after that.

Kara Sherman 19:12

I did. I returned to Pensacola and went to the University of West Florida for two years and then and then I worked for CVS pharmacy for about five years. And CVS, I worked in the pharmacy so I was not able to attend a lot of Sunday services for about I think it was like two or three years just because I was the lowest on the totem pole so I didn't get weekends off. So it really get time to attend. The when I first started I could attend because the pharmacy didn't open till noon. And our services were normally over or I could just leave a little bit early and get there but then they started opening earlier so I just lost out on the opportunity But I was able to attend on Wednesday nights.

Blake Smith 20:03

Okay. Okay. So you've been with a couple of different traditions, although sounds like you've been with Community of Christ, most of the time, I think it's safe to consider that a lifelong member of the church. But how has the sacred community, the religious sacred community been an influence in your life in the different places? You've hinted a little at that, but I'd love to hear more about how that's been an influence in your life.

Kara Sherman 20:35

So to give a little backstory, I come from a, I would say more of a broken household. So I had a side of my family who practiced in things that were not healthy for them. So they were into drugs and alcohol and all unhealthy things. And then I had a side of my, my mom and dad had gotten divorced when I was really young. And my brother is I have a brother that six years older than me, so we kind of live two different lifestyles with our parents. So he lived, he knew them married. I didn't really know them married. So my dad's side, my dad had full custody of me for a couple years, and my mom had, we had the switch, week to week for a while, things like that. So the, my dad had the bad influences in his house. So coming from a split household, where one side was healthy, had gotten the help they needed, and one side was not healthy. I would say the religious and sacred community meant a lot to

me, because it was a very safe place to go. Felt like every time you walked in, it was a big warm hug. And that you had people that were, I would say, on your side. And you didn't have to worry about unhealthy things. And I would say that it has shaped because where my father is now is not I mean, he's, he's not in a healthy place. He had a stroke. And he lives in a facility and he doesn't even know what year it is. So knowing the lifestyle that he lived, it makes me feel like the religious and sacred community helped me make hard decisions to get out of that lifestyle once I turned old enough. So I was able to turn 13 and say, I choose to live in the healthier lifestyle because I had those options, those camps that church life, I had people that were on my side, I had people that chose to be, and this sounds probably a little cliché, but they were people who chose to be my family, chose to love me even though they had no blood relation. And I felt that through my whole life. And now having a child in the church that has grown up since we came back from the pandemic. She was less than a year old when we started being able to meet again. And I have a child that goes to, when she pulls up to church or when we pull up to church. I go to get her out of the car seat, and she says, "Yay, we're at the party. We're going to church party." And so she's so excited to go to church, she tells me all week long every morning, she wakes up, she's like, we're going to church. Today we're going to see all of her favorite people especially Holly, so she always says, are going to the church party to go see Holly. And so just knowing that she has these people that when she walks into the building, she can work a crowd, she can go out there and see our church, we've been having a praise band. And so every Sunday, she goes out there and she gets to go grab her shaker and be completely enmeshed in an environment that is healthy, safe, loving, and she knows she's so loved when she walks into that building.

Blake Smith 24:14

That's really exciting to hear that Noah, Kate enjoys going to church so much that it's a party. So I would ask, you know, we're obviously in the church, we see a lot of folks who grow up in the church, and we're not the only church that is that way. But young adults who grew up in the church and are part of youth groups, and it's really important and then when they get to in their 20s and 30s, they either make other choices going to other traditions or walking away for from church for a while. So I'm just interested what is it that has kept you in Community of Christ during these years?

Kara Sherman 25:03

I'm so that's a question I've been thinking about a lot since you've sent out the list of potential questions. So have you ever had that over felt overwhelming feeling of just a good hug, or an overwhelming feeling that just brings you to tears every time you go into a building, or go around the people who make up the building? Yeah, that that family that bond, the people that you could walk up to, and you haven't seen in a year, and you can continue the conversation exactly where you left off. I think that the community is what continues to bring me back to Community of Christ. And we have, my family, my husband, and I, his family's from Mississippi, and we have ties to both mission centers that attend our campground. So our campgrounds has, we have two mission centers that attend it and run it. And so through these two mission centers, where we attend very regularly between the two, and so I just feel like it's at home. It's something at home, I have, I have a very deep history of military in my family. So everything is structured, with my grandpa, and that side of the family. And with coming to church, it's almost like imperfect is perfect for the church. And so [I love that] imperfection, you're not looking for perfection through every in every body and through everything you're looking for the imperfections that make you human. And I think that that's something that truly makes me feel part of

the community is that I know that I'm imperfect, but I know how I am going to be embraced in those situations of being imperfect.

Blake Smith 27:13

Very good, not just to step back, you mentioned your husband, again, Mike, and you said that you guys met at the campgrounds. And we've kind of gone through the stages of life and getting to now where in that mix did Mike come in.

27:33

So Mike and I actually met at the camp grounds when I was in fourth grade. And he was in third grade. He's a year younger than me. And so we attended camps that we really started getting close when we got into middle school or into middle school, early high school. And we were just friends, we kind of, we had two friends, he brought someone to camp when he was in third or fourth grade. And my friend that I had in the church that I hung out with very regularly at camps. She started dating the friend that Mike brought to camp. And so we were kind of, we were kind of third wheels in this relationship. And so we ended up, they ended up going and hanging out and doing stuff at camps, and so it kind of left us to hang out. And so when I graduated high school, I went off to Graceland. And they were still in their senior year. And that camping season. I had never thought of Mike in that way at all up until my freshman year of college, that summer in between. I had been a staff that every camp that summer. And then towards the very last camp that Mike had been a staff member with me. I started to have feelings for him that I had never had before this moment. And it just kind of happened that we ended up getting very close. We hung out for the rest of summer. He went to Ole Miss or University of Mississippi to attend college, and I went back to Graceland. And we did a long distance relationship for about four years in total where he was when I was at Graceland. It was about 12 hours of a difference that we were how far apart we were and then when I came back to Pensacola was about six hours until he graduated college.

Blake Smith 29:48

A little bit of a long distance relationship.

Kara Sherman 29:51

And then as we as our relationship progressed, we knew we wanted to get married at the campgrounds and so we, most people at our campgrounds get married, either in one of the buildings or we have three crosses on a hill. And most people find a way to incorporate that. Well, we knew the amount of people we were going to have that it was just not going to be feasible to do that. So our campgrounds has this huge field out by our tabernacle. And so instead of we, we had someone build three crosses to put up and representation of, or to be able to still include the three crosses that were so important to us into our wedding. And so, and we had, the last count that we know of was over 300 people that attended this wedding. [Wow.] And so it was a, it was a very fun celebration for us. But not only that, for this community that we've created, so there were 300 people there. If not that, we put out 300 chairs, and there were still people standing in the back. So I don't know an exact count. But I know that there were a lot of people who attended and had a wonderful time. They were, you could tell that it was something that they felt comfortable being at and there were people dancing, and having the best time, it was just like you were back at camp. So it was, it was totally worth all the stress that weddings bring.

Blake Smith 31:28

That is another thing that has changed since I went to Bluff Springs as a camper. We were not allowed to dance. Yeah, so, but I'm not jealous. I'm glad that we've progressed to that point. Actually, I think at senior high camp, we were allowed to square dance, because that was safe. It wasn't intimate so we could do that. There was room for the Holy Spirit. But, yeah, that was not something that was allowed. I think the campgrounds probably would have burned down back in the 70s and 80s when I was going to camp if that had ever happened. Oh, my goodness. Well, this is not a question that I gave to you in advance, but I'm interested to know what, you talked about having some roles in the congregation and being involved in the congregation there in Pensacola, what are some of the roles that you have now that you are that you've engaged in in the last couple of years?

Kara Sherman 32:32

I don't know that I could say they were official roles. But we, Mike is a big part of the pastoral team that we have North Pensacola. So I kind of get roped into a lot of different unofficial roles. But we have really been able to, we have I, I want to say we've had. And this is just my interpretation of it. We've had the opportunity and blessing that people accepted us so easily into the congregation as young adults. So they want us to do anything and everything, with the exception as long as it keeps to their tradition of what we've always done for Advent and Christmas. But as long as, as long as those things are accomplished, for the most part, we have a lot of flexibility to do a lot of things. So I wouldn't say there's any official roles that I can think of, but we're in charge of our Wednesday night activities that we do. And so we have to get everything together, the food, things like that, because our congregation, actually before the pandemic had a flood. And so we were out of our, we were out of our building for I think about six months. And then we were out of any activities besides one hour of Sunday morning services. And I mean, we didn't have a stage, we didn't have carpet we did we were meeting in the chairs we eat in for the our fellowship hall. We had, we had no, like there were still glue on the ground from where it had been pulled up. There were wood off to the side. So, we had only been able to meet in there and 2019 and we had just got carpet in when the pandemic hit. And so we went, so we had gone from one thing to another. So, we've been in rebuilding yours for about two, two and a half years of rebuilding from not just the building but our congregation is as well because not only did the pandemic kind of affect our membership, and we actually have a lot of elderly people in our congregation that had were unable to drive. They were unable to drive at night. There was just a lot that happened throughout the pandemic. So we've been in a lot of rebuilding. So these traditions and things that they've always had, we've had to improvise, because some of the people who always did these traditions are no longer able to either perform them, or able to tell us how to do them.

Blake Smith 35:16

Ah, right. And probably with some of that break, they're just so glad to be able to be together, they might be a little bit more flexible in holding to some of the, the old ways perhaps.

Kara Sherman 35:31

Yeah, and I would say that we have, we have a split congregation. So we have a congregation, half of our congregation, they all attended in the time that you were probably regularly attending. And they like things how they were always done, but we don't have the same. We don't have the same people as

we've always had. So [right], we find ourselves in a dilemma that and then we have a congregation that they are absolutely outreach driven, they want to do outreach like this is, this is what our Sunday school classes have been about. We have an intergenerational Sunday school class that we were able to start up until everything got completed in our buildings. And that's been our class topic for probably a year is outreach, outreach programs, things like that. So we have a lot of outreach, but we also have to balance with the tradition. So that they want to do we haven't been able to accomplish everything we wanted to for Outreach.

Blake Smith 36:36

Well, I understand but I am encouraged as a former participant there that there's some flexibility. And I appreciate the energy that you guys are bringing there as well. So... So, as an obviously, I think, maybe probably working with the traditionalism and the desire to hold back would certainly be create some struggles. But I, what I'm interested in knowing is as a young adult, taking on responsibilities in the church and in church in general, what do you see as some of the biggest struggles for the church going forward, especially as we try this outreach, that you're talking about reaching new people and new generations?

Kara Sherman 37:24

I would say the biggest problem, and I know this is may be regional, I feel like it might be, at least nationally, is commitment. I feel like that is one of the struggles that I see, is we have a lot of commitment, we have a lot that we want to do. But we don't have a lot that are able to commit to make it happen. And I'm not just talking about, as far as outreach goes, I'm not talking about going out into the community to do the outreach, we have a lot of people who will do that part, but having a place for everyone to come back to. And we can't bring a bunch of new faces into the congregation without having something set up for them when they get there, or something that we can easily be able to put in place when they get there. So, right now we have, we have a big age gap between our children. So we have, we have nursery aged children, and then we have middle school children. So there's very little in between there. So I think we have four and under and then we have 13 and up. So there's, so, but if we bring in a lot from the community, we would have to make sure we had classes set up for this in-between age that we don't currently have, which means we have to have Sunday school teachers. And this isn't just for our congregation, I feel like this is probably overall of being able to have that commitment of somebody to be able to show up. We live in a world where online became the new way during the pandemic. So, it's easier to attend online than it is to attend in person. So that commitment, I feel like he's just kind of gotten lost in coming back from the pandemic, but it could have been before the pandemic, but that's when I started noticing it.

Blake Smith 39:15

Sure, sure. I think there's definitely some truth to that. And congregations I see are trying to find that balance between holding on to tradition, saying, "we've got to do it a certain way and be at a certain time and in a certain place," and being flexible, I think to say "well, maybe we need to have an online option so that busy families can join for a brief period without making the time commitment." And it's a it's a tough thing. So it's good to hear from a young adult that is very committed it in the local congregation that that's still a viable option. And I think you're right on in terms of the being prepared, because you want to do outreach. And you may say, Well, gosh, we don't have kids in this age group.

So we don't have a class for it. But are you prepared if you do have somebody walk in the doors and have need for that? So it's kind of kind of a hard thing to balance there. So

Kara Sherman 40:23

We have, you have a Seventy in our congregation that is, that is outstanding. And his exact words normally are that he is all about outreach, but he wants to make sure that he has a home for them in the building if they come in. So what do we do with? What do we do with the outreach, the product of outreach, if they come? We can't just go out to the community and say, come to our church and not have a place for them. And so it's just something that really stuck with me, after hearing them say it. I was like, are we really prepared for outreach do we need to work within to get ourselves ready to be able to help bring ministry to others? Because if we don't have a place for them to come to, then we really haven't done our job?

Blake Smith 41:11

That's a very important question, because you may only get one chance. And if they come and don't find what they're looking for they, you know, they may not return. So, but I think what you've said earlier about the congregation is walking into that big bear hug. The warm hug of reception and hospitality is a really important aspect that you do have, regardless, so that's, that's a good start, for sure. Well, how about your hopes for Community of Christ Carol? What are your hopes for Community of Christ in general, as you know, we obviously as a denomination are, have been and are continuing to deal with difficult topics and issues and what we should focus on and how we do mission of Christ. What are your hopes for, for the church?

Kara Sherman 42:07

My hope is for Community of Christ to be a small church, small church that makes very large impacts as an either the community, because I think it's amazing how we are strategically placed in communities. So we should be able to make big impacts in those communities, and to be a place that feels like coming home. And that would be my biggest hope, and a very broad sense. I'm sure there's things that I could break down. But I feel like in a broad sense, that that would be my biggest hope.

Blake Smith 42:43

I think that's a very good aspiration to have. What about, what is it that you would need, you would hope or need the church to hear you say, as a young adult who is is, is committed and is staying the task and, and continuing to engage in a congregation?

Kara Sherman 43:11

I would, this one has been very hard for me to come up with one or two things. So

Blake Smith 43:20

Say as much as you want. It's OK.

Kara Sherman 43:23

I would want the church to hear, not only just church leaders, but our congregations and our people that are listening, that worship is only an element of church, but it is not all of church. So church is us

meeting together, whether that's eating a meal together, go into a coffee shop together. And a one size does not fit all. And just because something is not catered to you your age group to the things that you're into, does it mean that it wasn't meant for somebody and that we are a community so we can find ways to put different elements of worship that speak to different age groups or different bodies or groups of people that fit their needs, but it doesn't fit everybody's needs all at once. So the service can fit all of the needs, but not that individual. Part of the service may not fit everybody in the room's needs. If I rephrase it, sorry, I probably made that a little more confusing.

Blake Smith 44:31

Nope, that made perfect sense. And I think it was well said, really appreciate that. Is there anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about?

Kara Sherman 44:42

Um, the only other thing that I was going to say is that I think that a lot of the traditions we have in Community of Christ are wonderful, but I think that we need to take time to challenge why we have that tradition, or we have this thing that we do. Why do we do it? What's the reason behind it? Is it something that still fits within what we're looking for, for our future of our congregations, of our mission center, of our church, and that we are, we are now a global church, and we probably have more membership in other countries than we do in the US. So making sure that we understand that the bigger picture is not always what benefits just you as a person, as it's what benefits our community. And that's something that I feel very strongly about lately, is making sure that we find, as a young adult, and coming from being in a youth group, most things were catered to me or I or my age group. So you normally have the youth and the young adults, where everything's catered to them. They have their own events, they have things like that, that they have time to be able to be a part of only things that cater to them. And it's amazing that we have these options. And I hope we continue to have these options, but making sure that our young adults realize, and youth realize that at some time in our life, we're going to enter a period where everything's not catered to us, especially when it comes to church. And that we can find our place in our churches, and our congregations, and our mission centers and, you know, world church wherever we need to. But it's not always going to be catered to our age group. And that if you are a young adult or youth that feels like you are not being able to be utilized to your full capacity, find a mentor, find somebody who can help you find the avenues you need to get in roles that you feel comfortable being in.

Blake Smith 47:02

Wow, good stuff, good stuff, encouraging challenging, great words. Kara, thank you so much for that. And I just want to say thank you, thank you for what you're doing in North Pensacola. Of course, I again, I have a personal interest in what takes place there. A lot of ,a lot of my spiritual growth took place there. And those are people who made me the man I am tonight, today and so they have a special place in my heart. And so I'm so glad that there are people like you there continuing to carry that torch and encourage folks and challenge folks. So thank you and thank you for being a guest with me here for this episode of Chai Can't Even

Kara Sherman 47:50

Thank you for having me. So excited to be here.

Blake Smith 47:55

Right well, and thank you to all of our listeners that we couldn't do this without you, or, we could do it but it wouldn't do us any good if we were just speaking to dead air. So thank you so much for being a part of Project Zion Podcast and being listeners and supporting the efforts here. Special thanks again to Kara for being with us want to tell you if you'd like to hear more from the Chai Can't Even series, you can find us at projectzionpodcast.org, and you can search through the "series" the drop down menu and find Chai Can't Even. Of course, you'll also find all of our other series there and we invite you to explore those as well. But until next time, thanks again for being with us and have a great day.