

Coffee in the Swarm | Danny Dennis

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Danny Dennis, Graceland University, Afterglow, Faunce, House President

SPEAKERS

Danny Dennis, Aliyah Farrell, Mike Hoffman

Aliyah Farrell 00:31

Welcome back to Coffee in the Swarm, a Project Zion Podcast production coming to you from Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa. The Swarm is our on-campus snack bar in the Newcom Student Union. This year, our podcast is co-hosted by campus Chaplain, Aliyah Farrell and Campus Minister, Mike Hoffman. Coffee in the Swarm is where we interview students at Graceland who are connected to the Community of Christ. Today, we are with our first guest speaker of the year, Danny Dennis.

Mike Hoffman 00:56

Hey, Danny, how are you doing today?

Danny Dennis 00:57

I'm doing good. Mike. How are you good?

Mike Hoffman 00:59

Good.

Aliyah Farrell 01:00

Good. Okay, so start off, just tell us your tell us about yourself. Tell us your story.

Danny Dennis 01:04

Alright. My name is Danny Dennis from Lee's Summit, Missouri. I attend Liberty Street, Community of Christ in Independence. Grew up always going to church. It was like one of those things where you're forced to go as a kid, and then you appreciate it more and more as you get older. Most of my best friends that I've made throughout my life have been through the church. They didn't go to my church, but we went to all the camps and SPEC and stuff over the years. [M: Cool]. Yeah. Very good.

Aliyah Farrell 01:33

Very nice. So, tell us about your year, your major, your house, all the things.

Danny Dennis 01:38

Alright. I'm a senior. I'm a biology major. I think I've got a minor in Chemistry. [M: You think...] And, yeah, well, I don't know this is maybe supposed to be under wraps or something, but I think if I, if I, it's like, on the DL. I think though...

Mike Hoffman 01:55

If you're accumulating enough hours you read this,

Danny Dennis 01:57

yeah, I just have to, like, add it in later. That way they can't make me do anything else that I absolutely don't have to. And I still get the thing. I think I'm also working towards a minor in music. [M: Oh, yeah] yes, yeah. And then, was it my house?

Aliyah Farrell 02:11

Yes, your house.

Danny Dennis 02:12

I'm on Faunce. It's my, it's my house, yep.

Mike Hoffman 02:16

And you were...

Danny Dennis 02:16

HP, I was president last year. Yes, yes.

Aliyah Farrell 02:20

How did that go? Is that one of your favorite things?

Danny Dennis 02:22

It was one of my favorite things ever. [A: Why?] it was just really fun putting together, like the events and the House meetings and designing apparel, just really more than any of that stuff, just getting to know all the hall and like bringing them all together. We took a trip to Des Moines in the winter with our sister house, and we went ice skating. That was pretty fun. [M: Cool]. We got a lot of the guys come out that don't normally, and we're able to use our house funds that we had accumulated from our victories throughout homecoming and just other things like that, selling things to get all the ice skating paid for for free. And then we went to dinner, but that was on everyone's own dime. It was pretty funny. We had a football player that I will not name to save his embarrassment. But, you know, we're pretty good. I ...

Mike Hoffman 03:05

You just had one football ... , oh

Danny Dennis 03:06

Well, no. I just, yeah, [M: for the story, OK], um, he was racing this other kid. They took one lap around the rink, and this little girl was, like, four or five, struggling to get by. So he, like, has to stop really hard,

and like, he ended up falling, like, right in front of her. So he slid by, and she, like, watched him hit the wall. And like, we're all making sure, like, this little girl's Okay, he didn't hit her at all. But, like, he's pretty close, but he saved it, and she just looked at him and went, "watch where you're going," and then, like, Dev skating. So we all made fun of him. It was awesome. Poor guy.

Mike Hoffman 03:38

Yeah. Oh, but this year, we should make a disclaimer. Danny, is, what are you doing this year?

Danny Dennis 03:45

This year, I'm the Council of House Chaplains. President, [M: right] So Mike, yes, I'm Mike's No, the word's leaving me, it was gonna be funny, and then I forgot ... underling ... henchman.

Mike Hoffman 03:57

We're working together closer than [...]

Aliyah Farrell 04:03

Okay, we'll get into later. Yes, speak to that later. So before you mentioned, like, your church, your best friends are from church, so like, just kind of tell us, like, go more in depth about, like, your church life back home and all that good stuff.

Danny Dennis 04:15

Alright. So grew up going to Sunday, nope, going to church every Sunday, and that includes Sunday school. So it was like, as a kid, like in elementary school, I was like, man, you know, you start to figure out, like, obviously not everyone believes the same things as you, and you're like, Oh, my friends, get to sleep in on two days of the weekend. I only get Saturday and Sunday I gotta get up, arguably, earlier than I did for school to go to Sunday school and but looking back, it was really fun. We had this big, like, gymnasium type thing. We just kick balls around, throw football before church, get super sweaty and stuff, and then we go to Sunday school, and then we go to the actual church service. And ...

Mike Hoffman 04:54

Were you involved in your church service when you were a kid? I mean, like ...

Danny Dennis 04:57

I mean, I read, I read some pretty solid invocation, benedictions and stuff. Yeah, I've never given a message. We do, like a camp service, like at the end of summer, where all the kids go up, and the little kids are like, I went to camp and I drank fruit punch with every meal. But then, like, the older kids are, like, at high school camp, I did this, and then it really made me feel connected and stuff. So that was, that's more like the speaker part of never officially getting, like, a sermon or message or anything. I think, actually, maybe the closest I've ever come to that was at the Lamoni Community of Christ Church. I've talked there several times, so [M: I've done that.] yes, but at my home congregation, I mean, I've had a I've had an invocation written down on my phone since, like, my freshman year of high school. I just say that every time I say that, we caught on. Then I gave it to my sister Callie. She reads it every time I think it's gotten kind of my youngest sister Lily now, who's a freshman in high school. Oh

yeah. And I tweaked it a little bit for the benediction, so I've got a pretty solid one that I read every time they don't know, but so

Aliyah Farrell 06:01

Have, have you been called to priesthood yet?

Danny Dennis 06:03

I have

Aliyah Farrell 06:04

So do you want to talk about that. [D: Yes], you know a God experience?

Danny Dennis 06:09

Oh, it was a long time ago. I feel like senior year of high school, or maybe freshman year of college, I was called to the Office of Deacon, and I just finished up my last class last spring. So I'm all ready to go. I just need to find a date to get ordained. Yeah, it's been a process trying to figure out times that I could get my classes taken care of, but I got the first two. I did scripture and Deacon pretty early on with a buddy Eli Wilson and Carol Price. They were great. And then I did intro to priesthood with yours truly, Mike Hoffman, last spring that we did, it was quite fun. Yeah,

Aliyah Farrell 06:46

Very nice. So what brought you to great Graceland?

Danny Dennis 06:49

Um, I'm a, I was going to say pretty big legacy kid. I don't want to make that sound like I'm, like, a hot shot or something, I know, but yeah, like, I think I'm pretty sure I'm pretty sure I'm a fourth generation Graceland student from both sides of my family. Yeah. So it's not like I was destined to come here, but I was going to come here and, like, at least for my family, like a lot, if not almost all of my whole family, has come here. So then, like, I've got two older cousins, and then my sister's a freshman here now, but I feel like throughout our time growing up, it was always like, Oh, I'm going to branch out. I'm going to be different. I'm not going to Graceland. I'm going to I'm going to do my own thing. But then we all kind of get to senior year, we're like, Yeah, I'm going to Graceland, yeah, but I wouldn't have it any other way. [M: Okay]

Aliyah Farrell 07:34

So we talked about earlier about you being chaplain and house president. So what has been like your church experience at Graceland so far?

Danny Dennis 07:41

So far, freshman year, was employed under Mike Hoffman as the campus pianist, something like that. I think so yeah, I played Sunday mornings. We had a service every Sunday, and I think on average, one person would show up that was not included in the service.

Mike Hoffman 08:00

Was your freshman year before covid hit, or after?

Danny Dennis 08:03

It was after. That was when it was, I think Gwyneth was in charge of planning the services she would be there. And usually Hunter was there to read something [M: covid was pretty...] Yeah, you you were there, yeah. And then I was at the piano, yes. And [M: which you still do sometimes] I do yes, if they ever need someone, it's me. I'm there. Yes. And sophomore year transitioned to being the Afterglow coordinator with my good buddy Nico Farrell, Aliyah's older brother and my roommate, [...]. Yes, and that was a good time. We moved my freshman year, I was part of the band, we did the services on Sunday nights. And then when Nico and I took over, we moved it to Wednesday nights.

Mike Hoffman 08:46

Which has been really a lot better, yes, yeah.

Danny Dennis 08:50

So we see a lot more attendance, lot more involvement. So that's pretty good. And then last year I was HP, obviously, so I just prayed for myself every night. And then this year I'm the Campus no Council of House Chaplains President, [M: That's a long name] Yeah, I like Mike's henchman. It's quicker.

Aliyah Farrell 09:11

Yes. Do you have any like plans for this year that you know you really want to achieve, or goals for yourself this year at all?

Danny Dennis 09:18

Yeah. So I think our biggest goal, that I think we've talked about, is just making sure we have resources and opportunities for all students, no matter what religion identity they have, or what they belong to, or what spiritual things they practice, just making sure that kids know like this is not strictly a Christian branch under Graceland Student Government. We are obviously big Community of Christ dudes, goers, whatever you want to call it, but we do want to offer resources to everyone and anyone that might need them. And then this year, we're also starting this new thing. We had our first one last night called, Share My Story, where we invite an alumni guest to come back to Graceland and share with us their story. How they ended up going to Graceland, what they did while they were here, and what they took from Graceland, what they learned, if whether it was like leadership or like school skills that helped them go on to, like a master's degree or medical school or get the job that they had next, and if they met their spouse here, just kind of things like that, and then any like church connections they may have had, and just hit our first one. Last night, we had a guest named Rick Hetrick. He did really well. Shared a fun stories. Time here.

Mike Hoffman 09:20

Lots of fun stories, Yes.

Danny Dennis 09:58

I thought he did really, really well.

Mike Hoffman 10:26

He did. He really did. He did a nice job of framing it all within the context of his faith too. So yes,

Aliyah Farrell 10:39

Thank you, Rick. All right, moving on to what your plans are after graduation.

Danny Dennis 10:46

It's kind of up in the air right now. I have been in the process of applying to dental school, and I've submitted my application to six schools. I'm working on three more, I think. [M: Three more?] Yes, three more in Chicago, [M: I thought I heard 30 more.] No, not 30. But right now it's just kind of a waiting game. They've all got several different deadlines. So the University of Iowa's is officially doing three days. So I've already turned it in, so I'm good. But then there's another one. Kansas City University is in Joplin, Missouri, and that one is, deadline is like February 1, so there's a big gap. So it's just kind of like waiting to see if they'll have an interview for me, or if they want to see me, and then kind of go from there so well up in the air. [M: Oh, we wish you well.] Huge lots. I could also just go work your grocery store if it doesn't work out.

Aliyah Farrell 11:45

So ideally, perfect world, which school is, oh,

Mike Hoffman 11:49

yeah,

Aliyah Farrell 11:50

What do you want?

Danny Dennis 11:51

Ideally, I would love to go to UMKC, University of Missouri, Kansas City, because it's close to home. I could live at home, yeah? Just, you know, [A: financially], financially, make my dad cook for me again. Yeah, miss those home cooks

Mike Hoffman 12:05

Well. And it's like you said, your hometown, but so you're familiar with that area,

Danny Dennis 12:09

Yes, yeah. And then also the, like, tuitions and state, [M: yeah]. And it's still not cheap, but it's a lot, but cheaper than it could be at those places

Aliyah Farrell 12:18

Very nice, all right, so we're going, we're coming to the end here. So we have a few Community of Christ questions, sure. Um, so what are your hopes for Community of Christ in the future, and what is one thing you would want the leaders of the church to know going forward?

Mike Hoffman 12:32

Yeah, especially this is an interesting time. We're recording this because it's, it's right before the 20 I mean, we're several months away from the World Conference, the next World Conference, but it's on the horizon, right? We just received some a pastoral letter. I don't know if you've, guys have seen it, but President or President Designate Stassi Cramm, and then the resolutions are out for conference too. So, yeah, so, but what are your hopes for the future, um, and if you could tell them, you know, yeah, I mean, your hopes for the future?

Danny Dennis 13:05

I would just say that the church has been such a big part of my own life. And there have been times when I was younger and I was like, I don't want to go to church, Mom, where now, like, looking back, I'm very glad that she brought me along, and my dad brought me along too, but he was always last at the door because he's he just took a while to get ready, you know. But I just would hope that we continue doing what we're doing. We make the adjustments where they're needed. This summer, I was a intern for Central Mission, oh, yeah, and I was at the camp all summer, and it was really refreshing to see all these kids that I've grown up going to church with who are now just old, like middle school, high school, and I, I, my hope for the future for the church is that we can keep sending more and more youth back to camps, because I know covid hit hard the churches and also like camps and SPEC and things, and it always is very sad hearing if we have to sell a campground or things like that, but I'm hoping that there's a new generation coming up where we have a lot more kids involved too, and a lot more youth going to all the camps and, like, showing up to church and things when they can. And obviously it's hard these days with like, sports and marching band and whatever you want to be involved with, but I hope that there's still a need and like, desire to want to attend Community of Christ things and happenings [M: and something for the leaders?]. What do we just do? We sold the the Kirtland Temple and things. That's probably a pretty hot topic, right? I've heard lots of people that were upset about that, and lots of people that were like, it was necessary. I don't really know. I feel like I need to educate myself more on like, why we do what we do. I can understand why people would be sad about losing that. But also, if you're like, it was probably necessary to get some of that, that money, you know. But I just, something, I would tell the leaders is like, they probably know more than anyone else. Like, no matter what opinions they hear, they're going to know more about what the church needs to keep moving on and not just surviving, but thriving. And like, something that I've always thought, you've ever seen movie Thor Ragnarok, you know, I have so Thor is an Asgardian, and something that I think, because, like, my church, I feel like was very modern, like I would show up in just athletic shorts and a T shirt every week, and that was fine, like, my dad would put on some nicer shorts and a polo, but like, the kids would just kind of wear whatever, yeah, and we have had church a couple times at one of our member's house, because he has this awesome big tree house in his backyard. It's like six tree houses that are connected. Not really cool, but we've talked about, like, what might happen? Like, do we need a building? Like, could we transition to just meeting somewhere in a park every Sunday? And like, I, I am very attached to the building that I grew up going to [M: okay], but that was kind of brought up because some of the churches in the Kansas City area, we area, were sold and just moved on from stuff. So that's kind of why that was brought up. But I just think that Community of Christ isn't a place it's a people, right, like the Asgardians that say Asgard is not a people, it's a place. movie, it's a people they blow up...

Mike Hoffman 13:46

That's the one where they relocate, yes, in

Danny Dennis 16:20

Like, Finland or something? No, I don't think we should do that, but I think we may have churches in Finland. Yeah, I don't know. There may be some downtimes or, like, some sad times that we have to sell more buildings. But ultimately, I do think that we're never going to completely just die out and be gone. We'll figure out something, and [M: amen], we'll just keep meeting together and doing what we do. We spread the love and the peace and the joy and stuff. I love that. I love that.

Aliyah Farrell 16:49

Okay, well, do you have any closing thoughts for the people listening today or in the future? I guess they'll be listening in the future.

Danny Dennis 16:57

Um, I don't know... go Graceland.

Aliyah Farrell 17:03

All right. Well, it has been a pleasure having you on the podcast.

Mike Hoffman 17:06

Yeah, Thank you.

Danny Dennis 17:06

Thank you for having me.

Aliyah Farrell 17:07

Yes. Thank you for kicking off our first one of the year. I think it was very fitting, and we're very glad you decided to do this. So that wraps up everything for today's episode of Coffee in the swarm. Thank you for listening. This is Aaliyah,

Danny Dennis 17:19

Danny

Mike Hoffman 17:20

and Mike.

Aliyah Farrell 17:21

Signing off until next time.