

Coffee in the Swarm | Hunter Bouverette

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Graceland University, Kiyah, history, Inspire coordinator, Community of Christ

SPEAKERS

Aliyah Farrell, Hunter Bouverette, Mike Hoffman

Aliyah Farrell 00:27

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 at the Newcom Student Union. This year, our podcast is co-hosted by campus chaplain, Aliyah Farrell and hosted by campus minister, Mike Hoffman. The Swarm is where we interview students at Graceland who are connected to the Community of Christ. Today, we are here with our second guest speaker of the year, Hunter Bouverette. Yay Hunter. So first, tell us about yourself. Tell us your story.

Hunter Bouverette 01:00

Oh, my goodness.

Aliyah Farrell 01:01

All that good stuff.

Hunter Bouverette 01:02

My story, okay, my name is Hunter. I am what I like to jokingly say. I'm a senior and a half at Graceland, because I have one more semester to finish up and then I am done. I'm a history major with a studio arts minor. So, I spent most of my time in the Briggs Hall building and the Helene Art studios. And I, yeah, I don't know. I'm on Kiyah, is my house, and really enjoy doing that. When I applied to Graceland, Kiyah was the house that I actually requested to be on.

Mike Hoffman 01:40

So you got what you want.

Hunter Bouverette 01:42

I got what I wanted. Yeah, I really couldn't tell you. A lot of it was I had Humberto Tinsman was my Graceland Rep for my senior high, which was my second and last senior high camp that I was able to go to, because the next one I was supposed to go to as a graduate was COVID. And so Humberto was there, and he was giving the presentation, and he was talking about how he was house president for Orion, and how he was really excited about it. And then he had kind of given a list of the women's halls, to the best of his ability, he's like, I was never, I never lived on a women's hall. So I can't tell you a whole lot, but he was talking about Kiyah, and how much he loved that, and kind of liked hanging out with those kinds of people. And so I kind of stalked the Kiyah Instagram page for a little bit. I was like,

you know, we'll see if this happens. And the application had, do you have a specific house you want to be on, which I'm assuming most legacy students are going to be using a lot more than myself, who technically is a legacy student, but it was my grandmother, and so my mom was supposed to come, but ended up changing her mind and things like that. So I didn't have somebody like whispering in my ear, be on this hall, be on this hall. So it was one of those things I was like, I like the look of the Kiyah Instagram page. So we'll see, we'll see how it goes. I didn't have a whole lot of preference. We'll just kind of saw what happened.

Mike Hoffman 03:14

You, going back to your major and minor for a minute. [Yes] Your major is history, [yes] your minor is studio art, [studio art.] Okay, and now here's my question, why are you, why were you over in the theater department so much?

Hunter Bouverette 03:28

Okay, that's a good question. So when I first started at Graceland, I was actually a theater major, um, it is a dark part of my past. I'm kidding, but I came in originally, and it was for stage management, so I was really, I was a stage management focused theater major, and that was kind of what I wanted to do. And after about two semesters or so of doing stage management and working with the theater department, I realized that I, if I wanted to continue to love theater and love that world as much as I do, I could not have a career in it, because I, it just, it's so it's such a demanding place to be, and so I knew that if I continue to do that, and that became my livelihood, I didn't think I was going to be a super happy person. So, I picked the second route of history, and I changed my major, actually in November of my freshman year. So I got pretty early on, and picked history because I loved doing that in high school. My stepfather was an archeologist as well as a history teacher. So that was always implemented at home, and I just kind of decided that that's where I wanted to go.

Mike Hoffman 04:47

So, sort of staying in the family business.

Hunter Bouverette 04:49

Yeah, in some ways Yes, although I do not have the patience to be a teacher. So, I love public history and telling people about history, but I like telling people who are interested, and I feel like teaching is, unfortunately, telling people really cool things, and they're not giving you an ounce of attention. So, that would be really frustrating, and I don't have patience for it.

Aliyah Farrell 05:16

Yeah, so going back to you, said you're a senior and a half, [senior and a half.] Why are you still here Hunter?

Hunter Bouverette 05:22

I ask myself that daily. I am still here because just the way that the time period of me switching my major from theater to history, they also were in the process of shifting and phasing out majors. And of

course, we didn't know that at this point. This was 2020, and that didn't happen until about a year later, I think. I remember timeline, but because of their phasing out of the majors, they also switched the curriculums and the requirements for the majors. And so, for the longest time, I was told that I would only need one math credit, and I only needed one of the English classes. And then after the phase out, that switched, and things got altered, and it was actually that I needed to have two classes of math, so six credits in total. And then I also needed all three of the English. [Wow] classes, which I was supposed to test out of with the AP scores and everything else. But at that point, I was like, whatever. I'll just, I'll hang out for one more semester. Yeah, so I walked in the spring commencement, and I got all the graduation photos and I posted them and pretended that I was done. And then came back here in August, [pretended] I pretended I was done, and then I came back for general education courses.

Mike Hoffman 06:46

Well, I'm grateful you came back.

Aliyah Farrell 06:49

Yes, you ever like regret switching majors, they brought back, right? Did you ever wish that you stayed? Or are you happy?

Hunter Bouverette 06:58

No, I I'm very happy. I'm very happy, and a lot of it is because I also know, with a history major, because it's part of the humanities department, I can kind of get a job anywhere and kind of doing anything. So if the first couple of years of out of school, I'm not working specifically in history like I want to, I still have an option. Whereas, theater is kind of, you're either, [yeah...] exactly like I could work in different places and do facility works and things like that, and lighting and things like that. But for the most part, if you have a theater major, the expectation is that you're going to go into theater of some kind of just, or teaching and again, not an option for me.

Aliyah Farrell 07:45

Okay, so what was church like that at home?

Hunter Bouverette 07:49

Yeah. So ...

Mike Hoffman 07:50

Where are you from? Where are you from?

Hunter Bouverette 07:52

Yes, so I am from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Um, so I am a part technically right now. I'm a part of the Headwaters delegation. But church for me was a, was kind of odd in the aspects that both sides of my family were church members, and so grandparents, great grandparents, and kind of that whole lineage. And originally, my whole family is from Michigan, so they were going to congregations there when I was much younger, it was you went into church on Sunday. Everybody knew your name. Everybody knew exactly who you were, and a lot of times, it was there were standing room only for some Sundays. And so that's kind of what I grew up with when I was really little. And then my mom and I, we ended up

moving after she had met my stepfather, and we moved with my brother to Milwaukee. So, I say that I'm from Milwaukee because I was there from the ages of nine on. So I'm a Wisconsinite. I say bubbler. But we found a congregation for Community of Christ there. And when we walked in, we realized my brother and I were the only two kids for about the first two years. And then we slowly started bringing kids in, and then they kind of phased out, and that sort of thing. And I think now that congregation in Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, the actual congregation they, they, I want to say that they have maybe 12 regular members attending, yeah. So definitely a switch and a change. But I, growing up in the church, it was very much, oh, we're seeing more family members, like we're using church to not only go and have that experience and continue to learn Christ's mission and learn the word of God, but also we're going to go see your, for lack of better terms, extra grandmothers and grandfathers and your aunts and uncles and things like that. [Cool.] Yeah,

Aliyah Farrell 08:10

So, what brought you to Graceland?

Hunter Bouverette 10:00

I that's actually a fun story as well. Originally, as I was applying for schools, my grandmother, who went here. Karin Bouverette, maiden name is Gardner. She went to Graceland, and she was here, she was on Paloma. And my entire childhood talked really highly about Graceland, and the more that I looked into it, the more that I realized I didn't want to go here. And I didn't want to be in a small town. I did not want to be surrounded by corn and things like that. I thought that I was this big city gal, and I was supposed to go somewhere. My dream was actually to go to Boston and continue to pursue again, the theater thing. So I was going to go to Boston and have a specific major in stage managing and things like that. And then in March of 2020, the world shut down, and the pandemic hit. And I realized...

Mike Hoffman 10:55

You were in high school...

Hunter Bouverette 10:56

I was in high school. So, I was finishing my senior year of high school, and I realized that if I was going to go to a big city and a big school that was a higher chance of COVID. And Graceland, at this point, because I was a Community of Christ member, and because I was a legacy student, I did not have to pay an application fee, and I also did not have to write an essay. So, it was one of those things where I was like, I might as well just apply, because I really don't have to put much work other than spelling my name correctly. So, I eventually got that letter, and I had both applications sent back to me, and, the school in Boston rejected me because they were only accepting a certain amount of students because of COVID, but Graceland accepted me. So I was like, no, maybe I'll go down there and I'll just spend a year and get everything out of the way, and then I can go and I can just transfer somebody, somewhere else. And then I fell in love with Lamoni, and I fell in love with Graceland and all of the fun. And I met, like, just great support group and great amount of friends. And I was like, Okay, I'll just, I'll finish all my Bachelor's here, and we'll go somewhere else, sort of thing. So that's why I'm still here.

Aliyah Farrell 11:29

I know we talked about a little earlier, yeah, Kiyah and all your time here. Your Graceland experience is coming to an end.

Hunter Bouverette 12:16

It is coming to an end, and then which I keep saying that I'm excited about and I'm ready to get out of here, and I joking with me like people ask me how I'm doing, and I give them a countdown for how many days I have left. But, I, the more that I think about it, I get a little bit sad. I realize that I am going to have to be what I consider a big kid after this. I have to, like, actually be an adult and get those things figured out, whereas Graceland, very much has a piece of my heart, and very much is a home to me, Kiyah especially I, and I hate using COVID and the pandemic as an excuse for anything, because obviously, like, I grew up through that and everything else, but being on a hall where immediately I had 15 to 20 new friends through a pandemic was really nice and really reassuring, because I feel like if I had gone to a big school, or I followed my friends in high school to a big school, I wouldn't have met anybody, really, because of, you know, restrictions, making sure that I'm safe and I'm not getting sick or I'm not passing something on. So that was really great. And now I get to sit there and people will ask me about Graceland, and I have to try to explain messy games and air band, and I pull up videos of air band from last year. And the question is always, do you guys have homework? Like, do you guys go to class? And the answer is always, yeah, somehow, miraculously, we do that and we get that figured out. But I, the more that I look at it, I would not have changed my choice, and I'm glad that I went, regardless of the fact that I'm counting down the days for my real graduation, as I like to call it.

Aliyah Farrell 14:05

Okay, so we're gonna shift gears a little bit. [Yeah,] turn to our church experience here, but you have a good church, um, good student church, and so now, since you're Inspire coordinator, [yeah] how would you describe your church experience?

Hunter Bouverette 14:21

Yeah, so here was very much kind of a shift from what I knew traditional church building to be into something kind of, honestly more fun and more interactive. And I mean, I say that I grew up and it was if we went to church with my grandparents, I was putting on the really tight like black flats and the dresses and the ruffely socks and, like, hating every moment of it, whereas now I am going to church and going to different things that aren't necessarily stereotypical church events. So. Afterglow, spiritual practices, spiritual resets that we do, and those things, I'm showing up in sweat pants or jeans that I'm not necessarily worried about what I look like or how I'm presenting myself, because when I don't have my grandmother behind me, kind of telling me that I need to fix my hair, fix my dress and that sort of thing. But, I started at Graceland, and I knew right away, as I was coming to school that I wanted to have more of that church experience, and I wanted to be more connected through Christ and more connected with the church that I grew up in. And wanted to figure all of that out and what that looked like, and how I could add that into my life, and I, as a freshman, was introduced to Mike, and all of a sudden, I was helping to plan Sunday morning worships. And Sunday morning worships during COVID meant that everybody was spaced out six feet apart in the NSU great room, and we were not allowed to sing. So instead of singing hymns, we played hymns with boom whackers. Um, they are still hymnal. They are still somewhere, I think that they're still in the chapel, um, but we, you know, we transcribed hymns and to make them into boom whackers. And the congregation hit boom whackers on the ground

and on their hands. And that has grown into, I remember an Afterglow, I think, two years ago now, where there were almost 90 people in attendance and just being in that space and interacting with people. And so, it has been so fun to see that grow, and I love being able to say that I was a part of that. And so now, as previously mentioned, I am Inspire coordinator, and that basically is me almost nagging Mike to see what we're doing that week and seeing what's going on, and just having a good time and trying to figure out the best way to make Inspire as a ministry practice hub, still being rooted in ministry, and still having people actually reaching out and trying to share the word or share spirituality the best that they can, while also not making it sound so daunting that ministry can be, so ...

Mike Hoffman 17:28

Almost everybody that's in Inspire anyway, it's so involved in other things on campus that I appreciate, yeah, and I very much appreciate your help this semester.

Hunter Bouverette 17:40

I, I've had so much fun, and I'd say that I'm nagging Mike. It's really, I sit in the office and I ask him what he wants to do, and then he looks at me and goes, well, what do you want to do? Like, there's not actually anything nagging happening, but, yeah, I mean, like, what Mike said, there are so many people in it now. I remember when I started Inspire, there were 10 of us, and now there are almost 40 students. And so trying to figure out, what in the world do we do with all of these people, and how do we get them to do something and feel successful with what they're doing, but also not overwhelming them and making them feel like, Oh, great, this is another thing that I have to add, stay up late, so that has been kind of a fun challenge as well. So...

Aliyah Farrell 18:26

You're doing phenomenal job.

Hunter Bouverette 18:27

Thank you. I appreciate it.

Aliyah Farrell 18:30

So what are your life plans after graduation?

Hunter Bouverette 18:34

Well, I am best friends with the Indeed app right now and applying to jobs and doing the big kid thing, as I mentioned. My goal is to get my master's and eventually, actually my Doctorate in Public History and Museum Curation. So, that's kind of the dream, but most graduate schools are not going to accept students to come in in the middle of a year, so once I'm done in December, I'm taking a semester off, and I'm just going to kind of work and get readjusted to a life that does not consist of 10pm meetings on Tuesday night, you know, Thursday night movies and things like that. So, figuring out what it means to not be a Graceland student, and then going off and getting higher education and things like that, and seeing where the wind takes me after school.

Aliyah Farrell 19:33

Want to go back to Milwaukee or stay kind of on the idle side?

Hunter Bouverette 19:39

Yeah, I, right now I'm staying in Des Moines. My partner is there, and we've been together for almost two years. So I'm not saying that I am stuck with him, because it's a choice, but I did not think that my life was going to be in Des Moines, Iowa, for sure. But the more that I think about it, and the more that I kind of just sticking to it. Des Moines is probably the safer option, as I'm just getting out of an undergraduate, little bit easier to live in, easier to navigate, and also cheaper to live in. Milwaukee's price of living is just crazy. And I love my mother. If she's listening to this at any point. I don't know if you will. She knows I love her. She's my best friend. We've got enough distance where, like things have to be planned for her to see me, and not just her popping up in the blue. And she knows this. She's aware of this stipulation.

Aliyah Farrell 20:33

So okay, so we're going to come to our closing questions.

Hunter Bouverette 20:38

Yes.

Aliyah Farrell 20:38

What are your hopes for Community of Christ in detail?

Hunter Bouverette 20:41

Oh, goodness. Closing questions is so large. Yeah, I I love Community of Christ. I loved growing up in it. I, and I hear a lot of people, you know, having not necessarily issues, but having some problems with the church and the way that things are running, and I think that a lot of that is just that we are in a changing time, and we are in a rapidly changing time. So I think that for Community of Christ itself, my hope is that we overcome kind of the craziness that's happening right now, and not necessarily that we are trying to get more people or kind of convert anybody. I don't think that that should be the goal. But I think that if we just continue to spread our message and kind of our goals and our kind of plans and missions, I think that that's going to get more people involved, and I think also that there's kind of this fear that younger people are not attending church, and they're not kind of interested in going to church, or having that kind of stereotypical Sunday morning regime that most Older generations are kind of really upset that are kind of going away. But I know that Community of Christ is an aging congregation and an aging church, but most, if not all, organized religions are, so I I have hope that we will continue as a church to kind of outreach to younger people, and I see it a lot in Graceland, which isn't a great example, because we're kind of in a bubble here in Lamoni. But I think that with the amount of people who are interested in the church here at Graceland, I feel like once we're out in the world, that will kind of grow, hopefully expand a little bit more.

Aliyah Farrell 22:40

The second or the second part to that question. So what is one thing you want for leaders of Community of Christ to know?

Hunter Bouverette 22:47

Yeah, I, I think for me being a history person, I think that I would love, if I had the opportunity to talk to leaders, I think that I would love to tell them to focus not necessarily fully on the future, but looking at the past and seeing what worked and what didn't. And I think that a lot of times we are in a spot where they are looking towards the future and they're looking at other faith journeys and other faith traditions, and they're trying to figure out, well, what are they doing that are working? And I feel like if we look more inner to ourselves and seeing what we've done in the past or what, and seeing what worked and what didn't, I think that that's going to be kind of a better stepping stone. And I'm not saying that looking to the future is a bad thing. I'm not saying that looking to other faith traditions is a bad thing, but I feel like we're missing this kind of aspect of we have all of this history, and we have all of this really rich history, and I feel like we should be looking back at that to try to continue forward.

Mike Hoffman 23:56

Thank you!

Hunter Bouverette 23:57

Absolutely. Thank you guys.

Mike Hoffman 24:01

Thank you for your time today.

Hunter Bouverette 24:01

I don't know. I hope that this is okay. I hope I didn't talk too much. But thank you.

Aliyah Farrell 24:12

Thank you so much for being here. Appreciate it. So that wraps up today's episode of Coffee in the Swarm. Thank you for listening. This is Aliyah...

Hunter Bouverette 24:21

Hunter...

Mike Hoffman 24:21

and Mike...

Hunter Bouverette 24:22

signing off until next time.