

Coffee in the Swarm | Andrew Wolsey

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Graceland University, Community of Christ, campus ministries, seminary, Navy chaplain, peace and social transformation, existentialism, theological journey, military chaplaincy, graduate assistant, 2025 World Conference.

SPEAKERS

Andrew Wolsey, Aliyah Farrell, 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 and the Newcom Student Union. This year, our podcast is hosted by campus Chaplain myself, Aliyah Farrell, and is hosted by 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 here with our first guest speaker of second semester...

Andrew Wolsey 00:53

Andrew Woolsey,

Aliyah Farrell 00:55

All right, welcome back, Andrew. We previously just pulled up and Andrew was on the podcast in October of 2020. So, we have Andrew back here again, because he's unfortunately leaving us.

Mike Hoffman 01:07

Oh, that sounds bad.

Aliyah Farrell 01:08

He's been here for what, a long ...

Andrew Wolsey 01:09

It's my sixth year.

Aliyah Farrell 01:10

Six years. [Yeah]. All right, Andrew, tell us about yourself. Tell us your story.

Andrew Wolsey 01:17

Okay. Well, I was born in Des Moines, Iowa, but when I was two, moved out to Boulder, Colorado, where I grew up. Both my parents were both pastors. My dad was a Methodist pastor. My mom Community of Christ. And then graduated high school. I came to Graceland. Here. I did a lot of different

things at Graceland. I think I'm most known for being like the house president for two years for Closson. Aliyah's boyfriend is one of the Closson boys, so... we have that connection there. Uh, now I'm graduate assistant for campus ministries here. And, yeah,

Mike Hoffman 01:50

And you're actually in your second year I said doing that, right? Yeah,

Andrew Wolsey 01:54

I'll have one more kind of semester after this. But, yeah, this is my last, like, school year.

Mike Hoffman 01:59

Yeah, and we're going to talk about that a little bit too, right? Because we're going to explain what you [A: my plans for...] your plans, which, yeah, okay, so, alright.

Aliyah Farrell 02:02

What was church like for you back home in Colorado?

Andrew Wolsey 02:11

Um, I'll stick with Community Christ, because I'm also Methodist. I was actually Methodist before I was Community of Christ until I was 14. But with Community of Christ, I was baptized when I was 15. I always went to, like, the church camps. I didn't ever really go to, like, actual church.

Mike Hoffman 02:26

But you went, like, when you say you went to church camps, you went as a little kid to church camp?'

Andrew Wolsey 02:30

A little kid, yeah.

Aliyah Farrell 02:31

Reunion,

Andrew Wolsey 02:32

Reunion. Five years old, you know.

Mike Hoffman 02:34

Gotcha, gotcha.

Andrew Wolsey 02:35

Um, my favorite one was Camp Paradise in Wyoming, which actually has been sold. But, [oh, yeah], um, Big Spruce in Colorado now, still there. All the church camps, all the retreats. We had always like the ski retreat, Spring retreat, during the year, those were good.

Mike Hoffman 02:50

So reunion for you was a Big Spruce, predominantly, [predominantly], okay, yeah, because last summer you and I went to big spruce together, yeah? So

Andrew Wolsey 02:58

When I think of church camp, I think of Camp Paradise, though. [Oh, ok] it's my high school and middle school...

Mike Hoffman 03:03

Oh yeah, sort of makes sense. Yeah.

Aliyah Farrell 03:07

Did that help influence like you to come to Graceland? Or was it more of like, like, I don't like your legacy child, which is, like most of the Community of Christ people like, was that a big influence? Or was it more of...

Andrew Wolsey 03:19

I think it was. I always wanted to go to seminary, and I guess I knew that, like, Community of Christ, I was wanted to work there, so going to Graceland, Community of Christ, it made sense to do that together. Yeah, yeah.

Mike Hoffman 03:31

So you really knew that, like, at what age did you know...

Andrew Wolsey 03:34

It was, okay, it's kind of weird. I remember being 14 years old a Methodist, uh, church service, and I would draw on, like, the bulletins I spent my entire career, like, I will be this age at seminary.

Mike Hoffman 03:47

Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, as an older guy, I always tell people, oh, have a plan. Be flexible, but have a plan. Sounds like you've had a plan pretty early.

Andrew Wolsey 03:58

Pretty early yeah.

Aliyah Farrell 04:00

You stuck to it too. It just

Mike Hoffman 04:01

Yeah, that's true.

Andrew Wolsey 04:03

Right, people...

Aliyah Farrell 04:03

You make a plan, and then God's like, no, plan isn't the right plan,

Mike Hoffman 04:07
yeah, but if it's God's ...

Aliyah Farrell 04:10
[...] connecting, like he was...

Mike Hoffman 04:14
How is it I've known you for six years, and I just now I'm learning, yeah, I'm sorry I don't ask the right questions. Evidently, good job. Aliyah...

Aliyah Farrell 04:24
Yeah, um, alright, so describe your Graceland experience this far.

Andrew Wolsey 04:28
Okay, um, what's I came in 2019 and that was the year COVID hits. Yeah, 2020 but Mike and I were on the...

Mike Hoffman 04:38
That was your freshman year. [My freshman year]. We were on a church history caravan together when COVID hit. Actually, it was pretty funny, if you wanted to. I mean, we were on this trip, and they closed the university while we're gone.

Aliyah Farrell 04:50
Oh yeah, you and everything shut down, yeah, yeah. [...]

Andrew Wolsey 04:53
When we came back, I got my stuff and then shipped back home right away.

Mike Hoffman 04:59
And. it, but then you, your second year would have still been in sort of a COVID like...

Andrew Wolsey 05:04
A COVID like year, yeah, I noticed people, like, got kind of, I guess, like, depressed that year, [right] Um, which, for me, I was kind of the opposite. Um, I'm, like, an existentialist. And so, like, my whole idea is to, like, live in the moment, Carpe Diem. Um, so I got really mad at the world, [yeah] so I dove into being a peer mentor, student pastor, a COSA rep, co-facilitator for the Community Development club. I like, I'm ...

Mike Hoffman 05:27
Still doing all those things

Aliyah Farrell 05:29
Do you think like that period of like COVID that like, influenced you to still pursue theology, and [I think it did...] your masters and obviously, like, come to be [...] eventually. Like, do you like, do you think that

really helped that? Because, like, obviously, you're by yourself doing a lot of soul searching, or whatever.

Andrew Wolsey 05:45

I think it did. I think, um, really, I was okay. This is going to sound weird. I was hanging with a girl a while ago. Like, everything you do is out of spite. And I think about, I think it's kind of true that a spite, I was really as mad at the world.

Mike Hoffman 05:57

Was this in that time period, you mean, or ...

Andrew Wolsey 06:00

That was just days ago, okay, okay, but yeah, I think when I was 20, especially, I was really angry. I was like, okay, like, this is the world. This is gonna try to do something about it, you know, just push me down this path.

Mike Hoffman 06:11

Yeah. I mean, you guys have lived through a really tough time. High school, I assume, for you Aliyah, and then Andrew for college. But, yeah, I mean, we have, in my lifetime, that was the strangest thing maybe that's happened so far. So, So Andrew, you know you've been here for your undergraduate experience. So, share a little bit about what your seminary experience has been as you you know because your role here, you've been part time working for grad or campus ministry as a graduate assistant, but then the real crux of this has been pursuing your master's degree through the seminary. So [yeah], what's that been like for you?

Andrew Wolsey 06:52

I think I have definitely a unique look at this, also coming from being a [house] president for two years. For me, Seminary is giving me this opportunity to stay with the boys on Closson. [Oh yeah], we're with them, right? We have this office right here, and always Closson guys,

Mike Hoffman 07:08

There are yes. In fact, I became a Closson father because, not that I've done a really good job with that. But yes, okay.

Andrew Wolsey 07:17

You've done a good job. I think that's been a big, I guess an individual look at it, is my relationship with Closson guys and people here. But in seminary, it's been good again, despite, I remember the first, like, class, there was some book that mentioned Spinoza. It was like, we're not going to read about that, but we mention him. So ...

Mike Hoffman 07:36

Mentioned who?

Andrew Wolsey 07:38

Spinoza, the theologian. So I wrote that, and it's had this whole path of, like, seminary, but also my own, like, readings and stuff. Oh, which, again, there's gonna do out of spite so just...

Aliyah Farrell 07:52

Has it been kind of difficult staying in Lamoni for six years just because of the vocation like, right? Obviously, you're, like, in your 20s, and it's obviously different than going in a big city. So, like, how has that been, just being in Lamoni?

Andrew Wolsey 08:06

So at first it was fine. I grew up in Boulder, Colorado, which is, I think, the most beautiful place on earth. Don't move there.

Mike Hoffman 08:13

Did you say, don't move there.

Andrew Wolsey 08:15

Oh, it's already too overpopulated. over popular. So, yeah, um, But being here was fine as a college town. I like that environment, yeah, like how small it was, but six years later, I'm okay getting out of here right before. But

Mike Hoffman 08:31

yeah. So just for our listeners to know, Andrew's actually in his last semester working as a graduate assistant. We've arranged for him, like last summer, you're going to stay out of work for the summer, but that's actually for Graceland, not the church, but, but so you'll be leaving sort of the end of July, I guess.

08:50

[...]

Mike Hoffman 08:53

Yeah, he'll be Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, and you have a new opportunity at SPEC, because you, you told us before the interview started, you're going to be the Rockies delegation leader.

Andrew Wolsey 09:05

Leader, Yeah, that's cool. Um, the person in charge went through some sicknesses right now, right? So that's why I'm taking over for the moment. Yeah,

Aliyah Farrell 09:12

That's exciting. [Yeah, it is] okay. So you're talking about, you're, you're graduating from your grad assistant program. So what's next?

Andrew Wolsey 09:23

I definitely have a lot of options, which I very much appreciate. If you asked me, like, three weeks ago, four weeks ago, I would have said a PhD program, and I was looking at Notre Dame for that, but now I'm looking at eventually being a Navy chaplain. I'm looking at a CPE program in Ohio. I'm applying to it, actually today.

Mike Hoffman 09:41

What does CPE stand for?

Andrew Wolsey 09:43

Clinical Pastoral.

Mike Hoffman 09:44

Okay, Clinical Pastoral. So it's a a training program to be a military chaplain then, basically.

Andrew Wolsey 09:51

Yeah, military or hospital chaplain. Okay, two relative category, yeah, yep, yep. So I'm applying to that literally today. Um, do. And then that'll be for two years they don't do that program in Ohio. Hopefully it's a bigger city than Lamoni.

Mike Hoffman 10:06

Well, there are some small towns in Ohio, right?

Andrew Wolsey 10:11

So I'm gonna do that for two years. Even if I don't get into this program, I still have opportunity to do a Navy chaplain. So this is just like the best presented opportunity for me right now? [Right] Um, hopefully Navy Chaplain and hopefully the Doctor program after that.

Mike Hoffman 10:26

Okay, [yeah], so still, maybe Notre Dame or something.

Andrew Wolsey 10:28

That would be cool.

Mike Hoffman 10:29

Notre Dame, yeah, okay,

Aliyah Farrell 10:30

Will they end up paying for your school.

Andrew Wolsey 10:31

I don't think so. It's okay. I've been paying for my school for a while.

Mike Hoffman 10:37

Yeah. So, Navy chaplain, okay, so, yeah.

Andrew Wolsey 10:40

it'd be cool to travel the world, um, aircraft carriers and destroyer or something. Yeah, you know, do foreign land be pretty cool I think.

Aliyah Farrell 10:48

How did you decide Navy, chaplain.

Andrew Wolsey 10:52

Between Army and Navy, the army? Well, you're kind of more in, I guess the stuff you stick in one place. I like to kind of move around. Oh, so

Aliyah Farrell 11:02

Do you have to go through, like, boot camp and everything?

Andrew Wolsey 11:04

Yeah, I think it's a less extent. It is five weeks, and there's like, an officer camp too, but, oh yeah, since

Aliyah Farrell 11:09

You have a degree,

Andrew Wolsey 11:10

Yeah, exactly.

Aliyah Farrell 11:11

Automatic officer

Mike Hoffman 11:12

Yeah. Well, that is quite an opposite thing, though. If you think about six years in Lamoni and then you're going to go tour the world.

Andrew Wolsey 11:20

Yeah, that'll be pretty cool.

Mike Hoffman 11:21

It is pretty cool.

Andrew Wolsey 11:22

I'm looking at a minimum of three years, but if you do 10 years, you get the full benefits, which would be nice too, and I could do three years active, three years active, and four years reserve and do my doctorate in those four years reserve. [Okay], that's my plan.

Mike Hoffman 11:36

Now, technically, you will not be finished with seminary. Well, explain that to me. I mean, because you have one more semester, I don't know semester, but ...

Andrew Wolsey 11:50

I have, my classes end in the summer, [okay] But my specific program, and I'm supposed to do an internship, or, like a some kind of program, [right] starting October. So, the program that I'm looking at for CPE also starts in October. So I talked to Zach,

Mike Hoffman 12:03

Zach Harmon-McLaughlin, Dean of the seminar, yeah,

Andrew Wolsey 12:06

He knows this, but [yeah], he's okay with it. Still me staying it on here, but okay with the CPE program being that, being that's ...

Mike Hoffman 12:13

Yeah. I mean, that makes sense to me. It's like, yeah.

Andrew Wolsey 12:16

So hopefully he'll OK that too. I'll never hear this problem. I would hold on it. So, yeah, okay, yeah. So even to get in the program, you have to have a master's degree. So I'm telling them, I'm still working on it, but hopefully I'll finish it.

Mike Hoffman 12:29

Yeah, right, right.

Andrew Wolsey 12:30

It all goes together.

Mike Hoffman 12:31

That was, that's why I brought it up, because I knew you had this sort of, what I would call dovetail experience, where you're threading one into the other. And it's, it's really, in some ways, ideal for you.

Andrew Wolsey 12:44

Sounds very ideal, if it works.

Mike Hoffman 12:45

Yeah, yes. He just noting. He just knocked on Formica, so yeah, or whatever this plastic is, yeah, not really wood, but it looks like, right, okay, yeah. Well, you know, immediately in our future, we have the 2025, World Conference coming up. So, is there anything, I don't know, about you and about everything you've been through and going through? Is there anything particular about World Conference that intrigues, or I don't know, if that's the right question, sure.

Andrew Wolsey 13:18

I'm curious, because it's talking about Peace, yeah, that's been the theme for the past, since, like, since 2018

Aliyah Farrell 13:24

Well, it's also your masters, what you got your masters in, right?

Andrew Wolsey 13:26

It is, yeah.

Mike Hoffman 13:27

Yeah. Well, we should explain. Yeah, you have your choice of Master of Arts in Religion, like what I ended up with, right? But you are now pursuing the ...

Andrew Wolsey 13:36

Peace and Social Transformation

Mike Hoffman 13:37

Master of Arts in Peace and Social Transformation. Yes, two years. I mean, sounds like, yeah, never, yeah.

Andrew Wolsey 13:45

Okay, so yeah, my concern, though, is, what does that mean for me, being in the military, and for a peace church, yeah, and we already have like, a Ryan Pitt's obviously, Navy chaplain right now too.

Mike Hoffman 13:56

Yeah. What is he in the army or navy? [In the Navy], Okay, so Ryan's in the Navy, and Ryan has connections, obviously, to Graceland. His father still teaches here, at least. Yeah, Max Pitt, so, and they're still living Lamoni, his mom and dad. So...

Andrew Wolsey 14:13

So, my concern is, what does that mean for me, specifically, especially if I want to work the church later on, are they going to be like, Oh, we're okay with you, that you served in the Navy, or are they going to say, hey, we're a Peace Church. You can't be doing that.

Mike Hoffman 14:24

You know, that's an interesting, interesting dilemma. I mean, I don't, I don't see the role of Chaplains being,

Andrew Wolsey 14:31

Yeah, I'm not going to have a gun, right?

Mike Hoffman 14:33

Yeah. So it's, it's like, it's, you're there to care about doing pastoral care, [right] For the men and women who are in the Navy that you get assigned to work with. I mean, you know, so, yeah,

Andrew Wolsey 14:44

I think that's why you'd want a chaplaincy.

Mike Hoffman 14:49

Yeah? I just don't, yeah, no, I totally agree with that. That makes sense. So ...

Andrew Wolsey 14:53

My concern for this World Conference is a different [Yeah], there are views on that, I guess. Yeah. Other than that, I'm not sure I guess [...].

Mike Hoffman 15:03

I know we, well, we both, we, we've, yeah, I, I don't know exactly how that'll come up. I, I can't remember what conferences, but I know that that conversation has happened before.

Andrew Wolsey 15:13

Yeah, I remember being a delegate at 2018 or 2019 whichever year that was, we had talked about peace then also, yeah, it's just gonna kept being pushed back. I know what?

Mike Hoffman 15:23

Okay, well, you have a long, illustrious time with theology undergraduate. I know you know you it while you did you take religion courses?

Andrew Wolsey 15:35

I took a philosophy class, but I was a history majors. That kind of like, oh

Mike Hoffman 15:36

Yeah, gotcha. Gotcha. Well, anyway, so I guess I have a couple of thoughts about or questions for you about theology. Like, is there in these might be pretty deep, I don't know. But how has your theology, how would you describe it? Has it changed since being, I don't know, in undergraduate and then seminary? Okay, how? I mean, I don't know.

Andrew Wolsey 16:03

So, I came into Graceland being a progressive Christian, which probably is true for most Community of Christ kids, but not most Christian kids, being progressive, [yeah]. Um, so I already had a very, I think, open minded relationship with God, [sure], without all that, um, Transcendentalism was a big thing for me in high school. Um, like Jack London, Henry, David Thoreau, all those guys. When I got here, my anger for the world and for, I guess God was there, I had resentment. So I kind of got into more of, like a my own will to power. What I thought was going to be like, I don't know what, what I thought I wasn't going to do. What should be done today is nihilism, Absurdism, existentialism, eventually, and realism. So, I consider myself to be a Christian existentialist, which is, God's given me opportunity, and I'm going to try to fit into God's will now. So it's like aligning my willpower with God's will is my goal. Yeah.

Mike Hoffman 16:57

Okay, thanks. Yeah. Is there anything you're, from a theological perspective, something you're passionate about. I mean, I don't know whether that would tie with your plans to become, you know, a Navy chaplain or maybe something else I don't know.

Andrew Wolsey 17:14

Right. I think the biggest thing for me, and like, and why I've been angering is, like, coming from the Rockies or being on Closson like, I consider those, those are my boys and my people, [right] I'm trying to, like, help in the world, and so that really is my passion. That's to be an example for those guys to show what you can do, and then also do what needs to be done too. It didn't do the thing. So that's kind of like a two prong approach. But that's my passion. It's just to really be there for those guys any way possible?

Mike Hoffman 17:42

Yeah, And you're sort of extending, extending that in some ways, in the Navy as well. I mean, you would be, because you know your boys, or, yeah, not just men, [the Navy people] the Navy people, yeah, OK.

Andrew Wolsey 17:59

Yeah. And I think also, just like, I think of like, the Rockies guys that are especially the Rockies delegation, but they come from not much means, and so trying to show them, hey, this is, you know, going to college, getting, like, showing them what you can attain. I myself do have more means than most people do, still being an example in the world that they can actually see and talk to you, It thing is good also.

Mike Hoffman 18:21

Absolutely. Okay, great. Well, Andrew, it's been a pleasure talking to you today. So thank you for this interview.

Andrew Wolsey 18:30

See you guys in six years, right?

Aliyah Farrell 18:33

Oh, you still have a couple more months. Yeah, we're not quite ready to get rid Do you have some closing thoughts? Anything else you'd like our listeners to know,

Andrew Wolsey 18:43

I'll talk to like kids who are thinking of coming to Graceland. Is that okay? [Yeah], okay. I think, when I think of it this way, when I tell a normal person to come to Graceland, I might have some reserves, but when I told my own kid to come here, it's 100% I would say, Come to Graceland. This is where it made me the person I am today. The hardships are there, for sure. Any college has them, but the community is such a safe place to fail here. I failed so many times. I know that I have, but I'm still being able to succeed in life. So, I think Graceland's the place to go to find out who you are and just to become a better version of yourself.

Mike Hoffman 19:20

Nice. Thank you.

Aliyah Farrell 19:22

That wraps things up for today's episode of Coffee in this warm thank you guys for listening. This is Aliyah...

Andrew Wolsey 19:27

Andrew...

Mike Hoffman 19:28

and Mike... Signing off until next time.