

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Unknown Consenting Pastor

Interviewee: Unknown Consenting Pastor

Interviewer: Chelsea Langerud

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Abstract: Chelsea interviews a California pastor about how services were altered in their church during the COVID-19 pandemic and also about his thoughts what COVID was and how it changed life. He discusses how he thinks COVID was an answer to prayer to find time with family and pay attention.

Chelsea Langerud 00:01

This interview will be recorded and uploaded to the ASU COVID-19 archive project, which is public, do you understand and grant permission that this interview can be recorded and made public at the ASC website?

Unknown Consenting Pastor 00:14

Yes.

Chelsea Langerud 00:16

Okay, perfect. So how has COVID 19 affected your faith or beliefs?

Unknown Consenting Pastor 00:33

Well, I mean, I think that that's a great, that's a great question, Chelsea. I think that right now, it's almost like the whole world is kind of in like a timeout, if that makes sense. Like, it's like, remember, when you're younger, and your parents would like make you go to your room and you couldn't like do the things that you wanted to do. I feel like right now, everyone is sort of in this like, timeout kind of space, where it's like, the things that we wanted to do, we can't do and the things the crazy thing is that the prayers that were praying, probably five, six weeks ago, "God take me out of all this anxiety, or I feel overwhelmed, I feel stressed, I feel like giving up," those prayers have been answered. And now we're almost praying, "God take me back to, to that place, I want to go back to normal, I want to go back to where I was before." And so it's like we're forgetting almost even. And I'm forgetting even right now in my face, that God is answering the prayers that I was praying two months ago. And I think it's normal to feel discontent all the time. There's this sense of the sense of always wanting more, or always wanting something different and never actually finally resting and accepting where we are right now in the moment. And so it's kind of like, it's like Egypt. And when God freed the Israelites from Pharaoh, and then after a while, they wanted to go back to Egypt, they wanted to go back to normal, they wanted to go back to that other place. And I feel that in moments like this, if I'm not careful, I won't recognize what God is doing right now, and how God has answered my prayers right now. So, how it is affecting my

faith, I would say is it's waking me up to recognize God is still faithful. And he still is answering my prayers, because he's answering ones that I've been praying for years, once that I've been praying for moments, I'm home with family, I'm home, raising my brand-new son. And that would not be physically possible, given my schedule, and my calendar, God has allowed me to slow down to where I'm not traveling to where I'm not having to go speak at different places. And I'm able to be present in the moment. So, whereas most people might, off the cuff very naturally, very quickly say that it's challenging them in a negative way. I would say that it's challenging and more of an invitation than a challenge. It's more of a invitation into recognizing, you know, what if God answered my prayers before, then what kind of prayer? Should I be praying right now? That I can wait to see God answer when we do go back to this, this this future tense, this releasing of the lifting of COVID-19? Does that make sense?

Chelsea Langerud 03:31

Yeah, no, that's awesome. Thank you. Um, is your religious community still gathering currently and how has COVID-19 affected your participation in your religious community?

Unknown Consenting Pastor 03:45

So, we're gathering virtually, so we grab, we gather online, I think it's really important in times like this, as a leader in the church, as a pastor in a church to recognize, you know, like, what Romans 13 One says, to honor the government officials and authorities and the rules of the land. And so we're not we're not saying right now, "You know, to heck with fear, you know, faith all the way virus ain't gonna touch me," you know, and then like trying to gather everybody and getting you know, all of Marietta Temecula sick. Instead, we're being very responsible. We're being very cautious. We're taking things we're leaning into precaution, because the problem with COVID-19 and with with gatherings, large gatherings is, you know, two months ago, eight weeks ago, I was already in meetings, three weeks before COVID actually shut down us gathering locally. And people were laughing because they're like, "this is ridiculous." "You mean REALLY like we're taking all these precautions, it's never gonna touch California." And, and the wisdom is that if you don't do something, then you'll be seen as negligent but if you do something and nothing happens, you'll be seen as taking too much precaution. And so people are going to always say that we're not doing what we should be doing. And I think that's one of the things that we're noticing right now is, you know, people want to get back to gathering every single week. And it's like, I agree, but I also recognize that I don't want to do before it's, it's not released from the government officials, the CDC, the health care officials in orders, and even just our governor in California. So, right now we're gathering virtually, we're gathering we're watching weekend service online. And we're doing small groups throughout the week, virtually. And I would say that, I would say that right now is the time when fatigue is settling in for a lot of people. So COVID is still continuing to effect just because we're having church online doesn't mean that everybody's still like, all in. I would say that right now, more than ever, there's a fight for to be present to show up to church. You know, even if that means in your PJs, eating oatmeal, you know, versus sitting in a suit, you know, in the front row

with your Bible, I would say that we're still we're still trying to have church, it just is physically distant, but not spiritually distant.

Chelsea Langerud 06:27

Yeah. That's awesome. And then the last question, is your religious community supplying or engaged any kind of community service in an attempt to help alleviate issues caused by the pandemic? And if so, what are those

Unknown Consenting Pastor 06:44

efforts? Yeah, so, um, so the answer is yes. So, we've been doing different things. We've, in the last five weeks, we've, we've already created 500 masks for, for our city. And the first ones went out to the medical officials and doctors and nurses to provide them with N95s. And also, we've been providing meals just yesterday, we went, and we fed the Marietta Police Department, with with meals. We've also been partnering with the homeless community shelter, which is project of Project Hope, yeah, it's project of hope. And that's in Lake Elsinore. And so, we go there. And basically, if you don't have enough money for groceries, you just basically park your car, you, you let us know that you're coming. And then you don't even have to get out of the car, you just open up your trunk, and we just load it with groceries. So center point has been making a lot of efforts to do those kinds of things. We've also been doing a phone calls. So, we did, we did an April call list we called 7000 families that are still connected to our church to reach and connect with them, pray for them and ask if they need any types of needs that we can help with. We've also, we've also been sending out care packages to students in the youth ministry that this is something we're working on even currently right now this week that we should be finishing up. But sending out just little boxes has like a sticker in it has like a note in there. Maybe some other different things like hygiene stuff for face masks, and we're continuing to create more and more masks, which seems to be the greatest necessity. And it also is.... Yeah, so that would say those are like off the cuff. Those are some of the things that we're doing right now. And then just from the get go, we've been really we've been really on board with CDC about not gathering like so even when, when they said, you know, "50 or less" like we were 50 or less when they said that it was 10 or less, we were 10 or less and we practice social distancing, even on camera, which I think is also a really big deal like, so even if like the worship team and like the pastor who's speaking in the service on camera, we even want to be six feet apart, just to help model for our community the importance of following the health guidelines.

Chelsea Langerud 09:16

Yeah. That's awesome. That's so good. Okay, those are all my questions. So, thank you so much. No problem.