

Nite Hunt ([00:01](#)):

Hello! I'm Nite Hunt. My pronouns are he/him. And this is Our Table: Trans spirituality conversations. Uh, OurTable is a project of enfleshed, where we create spiritual nourishment for collective liberation. You can learn more about enfleshed at our website enfleshed.com. As the trans faith intern at enflesh I'm excited to be the host of OurTable, an audio project that brings trans people together to have the spiritual and religious conversations we want to have on our own terms. OurTable will be made up of four conversations each with different themes and different guests. Today, we're talking about celebration and joy. Today, uh, the guests will be hosting is Reverend Kai Greer, Myles Markham, Sam Ames, and Reverend Remington Johnson. Joy is a vital part of our life and existence as trans folks, there seems to be an abundant amount of media around violence, discrimination, and apathy that trans folks experience both firsthand and secondhand. When so much of our life is spent surviving the inhumanity we face, joy becomes more than the big moments. We learn to feel it in the smallest parts of our lives, reveling and hugs, moments of gender euphoria, new hairstyles, et cetera. Joy nourishes our spirit and revitalizes our relationships and our communities. For some of us, religious institutions have been a major barrier to our joy. For others, spirituality and religious communities have been a source of our joy sustaining us through the hardest times. For many of us, it is a mixed bag with respect to the complexities of our religious experiences and the serious barriers to our collective thriving. Still, we know we create and we find joy in our trans lives and experiences today. We want to center that joy and the role it plays in our lives, spirituality and communities. So let's begin with some introductions.

Nite Hunt ([02:11](#)):

Um, Sam, we can take it away.

Sam Ames ([02:13](#)):

I am Sam Ames. Um, I am a, uh, civil rights lawyer in the LGBTQ movement, particularly in the fight for trans rights. Um, and also, uh, a theologian groupie. Um, I have, I think I have a degree in being a theologian groupie, um, and I'm really happy to live with two theologians who, uh, yell at me a lot about theology. Um, so I'm really grateful to be here and, uh, and talk about some, some radical joy and some, um, ways that our faith communities could be a little better.

Rev. Kai Greer ([02:49](#)):

I am Reverend Kai Greer, pronouns name only. So Kai is great. So who am I? I am a chaplain I'm currently serving as a chaplain. I am ordained independently and I consider myself a courier of compassion and on a more personal level, I am every day trying to learn more about myself and the world around me. And that's kind of who I am. I consider myself gender nonconforming within the community and yeah, Kai.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([03:35](#)):

Um, my name is Reverend Remington Johnson. I am a Presbyterian USA, uh, ordained. I've been a healthcare chaplain at the bedside of the sick and the dying for the last 10 years. Um, I have, uh, I was described by one position as the purveyor of all things pleasure. Um, and which sounds scandalous, but I, um, yeah, I, I have been, I've been around a immense amount of death and suffering. Um, I use she/her/hers, I'm a trans woman. Um, and really feel like part of, sort of who I am is tapping into sort of that like joyful presence in the midst of just utter chaos and sorrow. Um, and that you can't exist with joy. You know, it's something that you, you sort of dance with as you participate in these moments. So I'm really excited to sort of wander around in this, uh, with y'all. So, um, thank you all for inviting me.

Myles Markham (04:45):

And I am Myles Markham. I use he/him or they/them pronouns. I am trans masculine and non-binary, I'm Japanese American and native Hawaiian. And I am a recovering Evangelical who is now working in documentary film as well as in disaster response for the Presbyterian USA denomination.

Nite Hunt (05:16):

Nice. Well, welcome all. And thank you for introducing yourselves. Um, so yeah, let's just get started with the questions, the first one being, what would you consider to be a moment your faith, religion, spirituality felt like home to you, if it ever has.

Sam Ames (05:35):

That is me going first again. Correct.

Nite Hunt (05:37):

Um, anyone can go first but please feel free. Okay.

Rev. Remington Johnson (05:45):

Um, God, there's just so many, like just fantastic examples. I mean, I can think of one where, so I, I, once I had sort of formally come out at work and ended up, um, I got my breast augmentation a week after, um, fully transitioned, you know, sort of like presenting, um, much differently at work. Cause it just, there was an opening and I was like, yes, let's do it. So, um, got the breast augmentation, which was life changing, you know, and it was this like delightful celebration of my body and integration, um, and sort of, um, that, that, uh, the Venn diagram of like sacred and sexy was a place that I wanted to sort of like, um, exist in. And so at that time, all I had in terms of like clergy, where as a chaplain, I didn't have a whole lot of stuff because, you know, you're, you're like in the hospitals, you're just going to like do that.

Rev. Remington Johnson (06:36):

Uh, but I had a, I had a collar that was a priest color that you could just like Velcro on to anything. And so I had this like bangin' bikini and I marched in pride with just the, the clergy collar, um, and the bikini with one of the local churches that had been with me as I transitioned. And it just felt, I mean, incredibly joyful and just, you know, just euphoric in a way that, um, yeah, it was just really special to me because it was a way of saying like, I don't have to, there's nothing wrong with my body. There's nothing, you know, and being able to display it. And then also just have like all of these like regular church folks in like polos and slacks, you know, like walking with me, it was just a pure mountaintop experience.

Nite Hunt (07:30):

Nice. That sounds amazing.

Rev. Kai Greer (07:33):

Thank you Nite, for listing the caveat, if it ever has. I think that's important because religious trauma is real general trauma is real. So thank you for listing that caveat. I would say along those same lines, uh, yes, I have, there have been moments in my, in my journey, which, which deeply felt like home. And it's interesting, you know, in chaplaincy, we are called to, to serve people where they are. And so, and so a lot of chaplains can't function that way too effectively, unfortunately. And so one of the greatest joys I have is to encounter care receivers who won't won't engage with any other chaplain, and yet they, they

encounter me or they, they experience my presence and they're like, I can, I can dig that chaplain. I can get with that chaplain. So, so that. And trans folks, non-trans folks of, um, folks of, of different and various religions. And so it, it, it brings me deep joy to be able to say, okay, this, we have crossed this and, and now we can, we can, stand in this gap together.

Nite Hunt ([08:55](#)):

Nice. Thank you.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([09:00](#)):

Yeah, Kai. I mean, that makes me think, I mean, when, so before I transitioned to, I had been working in the hospitals for like four or five years, and I was a very slick looking white guy in a suit. Um, and it was amazing to me that once I transitioned, I could much, you know, of course there was some pushback with some folks, actually not very much, but folks were much more readily able to go vulnerable and deep, and connective in a way that was really nice. I didn't have to sort of like drop all the breadcrumbs that I was a safe person who was not going to, you know, judge them or make them feel bad. It was just sort of like, you know, no matter how sort of like stereotypically normal, the patient would look, they would sort of like almost, you know, much more instantaneously sort of rest into this vulnerable, safe space. Um, where, when I was looking the other way, I had to be very explicit about laying out that sort of like this is a safe space. So I, I really resonated.

Rev. Kai Greer ([09:57](#)):

And it's particularly, uh, Remington, particularly with folks who once you get into their narrative, folks who have experienced disenfranchisement, right. Mostly that's my experience, right? So like, wow, this person I can connect with this person. It doesn't even matter who you are, what you are, how you present yourself. I can connect with this person because this person knows me. Yeah.

Sam Ames ([10:24](#)):

Can I so like address something you said, because a lot of what you said was just so brilliant, but I wrote this down, I wrote down how to exist with joy in the midst of chaos and sorrow, which just feels like, like this, this essence of a gift that, that trans people in particular, you have to give the world in particularly faith communities that there's such powerful potential through our having lived millennia, having to exist in chaos and agony and having to find joy in that, because there is no other way that we survive and have survived for this long. And I feel like, I feel like that kind of chaplaincy that I, that you talk about is such a gift that I think, um, that he had Kai talks about as well, um, is such a gift. And also that there is this, this gift to us that, um, that we have always had this knowledge base, this potential. And finally there is this moment where tentatively and in fits and in starts, we're able to engage that with a world that is starting to see it as a gift. And like, I just, I would totally love your pleasure chaplaincy if I were in the hospital. That sounds, that sounds transformative, safe and, um, and joyful.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([11:33](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I think so I have been in the Texas legislature this year because there's a lot of bad bills coming and there's a lot of hateful rhetoric and it is very toxic. Um, but one of the things that when I testified yesterday that I was really sort of like keying in on, was just like, what a gift like trans youth and trans people are to communities. And, and I think, I think you sort of use sort of like really parse that in a way that I think is really just, I don't know. I, I, I, I want to spend sort of more time sort of looking at that, which is it's this, the words feels slippery to me, but it's this, it's this sort of looking at someone who, you

know, the way I put it is like, these are folks that heard the still small voice and they responded. And I, I, you know, it's sort of like, God, this is just like faith in action. These folks are just living out by literally being visible and continue to take continuing to breathe. Um, yeah, just, um, yeah, it it's slippery to look at, but I think it's just like such a blessing to the communities. We are such a blessing to the world. They all should be grateful that we're around.

Rev. Kai Greer ([12:54](#)):

Heck yes.

Nite Hunt ([12:58](#)):

Yeah. I feel that, um, like even for me of like, I ended up converting to Islam when I was like in college and it wasn't like, I don't know. It wasn't like this big like moment of like, I don't know, meeting someone or like, I was like, oh, this is it. I dunno. It, it didn't feel like this big momentous thing. I was just, I ended up studying Islam as I was studying just many different kinds of religion, um, in college. And I was just like that one fits, like, it just feels nice and it makes me feel good about myself. And I want to like investigate that more. Um, but I always consider myself, like, when I introduce people where I tell people I'm Muslim, I'm like, I'm a bad Muslim. I'm like, I don't know what I'm doing. My Arabic is it's real bad.

Nite Hunt ([13:42](#)):

Um, I I'm barely learning everything, but it's just something that feels like I want to investigate more. Um, but it isn't like unique or above any other like rhetoric as far as like transphobia and homophobia goes, but, oh, it was just like, this is something I want to start my journey with. And that's kinda like how I ended up, uh, doing Islam, I guess, or like wanting to do Islam. But I feel that I've just like it being chaotic because my half of my family is Christian. And then the other half of my family is Muslim on my mom's side. And so my grandma's always like, so why are you a Muslim? And I'm like, grandma, it is 10:00 PM. I'm going home. Goodnight. I love you. And she's like, so we'll talk about this next time. And I was like, we'll talk about this next time.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([14:33](#)):

I mean, I think that's another sort of like the beautiful thing that we bring, which is that, I mean, I, Kai really sort of nailed this and you sort of give another example of this is that, you know, we allow folks to exist outside the orthodoxy of their traditions, um, in a way in which it allows them to, you know, really sort of like do things that are interesting and in generative, yeah.

Sam Ames ([15:05](#)):

The first place I felt place that I felt home and spirituality was I, again, I grew up Unitarian Universalist, which was in some ways a big gift, this progressive religion that would my first queer people I met there. And in some ways I continue to be grumpy at it, but they're my people and I can choose my family. And here we are. Um, but I grew up not just in the church, but going to this, uh, this camp where I met, where I met Nite, actually, it's one of our, it's one of our denominational camps. Um, they do youth camps all the way up through it's called the Beneville Pines. And there was just this thriving, incredible, like gender explorative. I I'm, I'm 34. Like this was 25 years ago. I'm not, I don't do math. Um, and it wasn't like it was allowed somewhere. It wasn't like we were being given permission or role models or anything.

Sam Ames ([15:51](#)):

It was just that there was this unsupervised situation, um, where a bunch of kids felt safe and comfortable with one another. And it turns out when you do that, identity has, has the freedom to roam. And I, I started going to church and found out this was not my denomination, um, that my denomination is nice. And, and a bunch of white liberals who really like to, um, talk about acceptance, but they have a lot of trouble with it. And I had this real gratitude that somehow I had gotten this family. Um, and I, I continued it. I live with two ministers. Both of them are Unitarian Universalists, but come from different traditions as well that represent Judaism and earth centered religions and the black church, they're all witches. And one of them was in charge of the denomination for a second and trying to make it better. But also there is this, this existence of a, of a spiritual life and with a connection with the sacred and the divine that can be individual and sort of like connected to a denomination that for better or worse, I do believe in. Um, but, but that is also about an individual connection, which I feel like so lives in trans skin, this individual connection to identity or to, to truth that feels right, no matter what the people around you are saying, or not saying that is affirming or not affirming, that there is a truth that we are connected to. And I feel like it, it allows us to exist beyond dogma, denomination, and even societal norms in this, in this way that can be really transformative and beautiful. Also I'm an introvert and individual, um, spirituality is a really powerful gift to me because I don't always like talking to people.

Myles Markham ([17:26](#)):

I was just going to share really quickly for me. Uh, I, um, grew up in a pretty, uh, conservative, evangelical tradition. And so, uh, spent, uh, my adolescence into my early twenties, uh, a part of a conversion therapy ex-gay movement. And in all of those experiences, I was finding some semblance of community. Uh, I think especially when it comes to the ex gay and like ex trans narratives, when you find other people who share in that story, it's not uncommon, uh, to get to feel seen and get to feel understood. Um, but it wasn't until 2014 after I had, uh, left those communities and left those experiences that I stumbled across, um, Q Christian fellowship. It, it used to be called the gay Christian network, but, uh, QCF has an annual gathering every year. And this was the first, uh, space I'd ever been in with other LGBTQ Christians. And it was a very stark direct, uh, and transformative contrast for me. And it was very much the first time I felt a true kind of home within Christian spirituality.

Sam Ames ([18:53](#)):

Miles. I think that's why I recognize you. I used to, I used to present at GCN back when it was GCN on conversion therapy and you came on this. And I was like, I know your face. I think it might be because of that.

Myles Markham ([19:05](#)):

Oh yeah. Yeah.

Sam Ames ([19:07](#)):

Well, glad to be here with you.

Nite Hunt ([19:13](#)):

So a lot of what y'all are reminding me of is just like the uniqueness that we get to experience of like being trans and being joy and like having that, like, we create that gray space for folks of, right. Of like getting to be able to explore more, whether it be just the non traditional parts of our religion, spirituality

or faith, or just like bringing the non-traditional parts of us and like, you know, people can see in us, we'll be like, oh, I want to work with that person because like, they get it. They somehow like they get it. And just like being called to that and in different walks, not just like in chaplaincy, but also just like in our everyday lives, um, of being like, cause you know, I was looking at y'all's profiles online and then I was like, these people, like I feel called to write and it's like just getting to see your work and like see your smiles and see your faces, see your tweets. Um, and that, that leads me to another question I have is can y'all remember, um, either the first time, or again, another like pivotal time for you that you felt a deep joy related to being trans, um, whether in your faith or not, or just,

Rev. Remington Johnson ([20:26](#)):

What was the word before joy?

Nite Hunt ([20:28](#)):

A deep joy.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([20:28](#)):

A deep joy.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([20:35](#)):

Okay. Can you repeat the question one more time? So, so it's, it's this effervescent joy that we feel when, you know, cause to our faith, correct.

Nite Hunt ([20:44](#)):

Uh, connection to being trans.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([20:47](#)):

Oh, connected to being trans. I mean, yeah. I think this is like something where like, I, I think for me, like, you know, I have this on again, off again, relationship with my body, um, and you know, when things are on, it is on and it feels good and it feels, you know, you know, just this, like, I just feel like a force where like, you know, I'm just like crackling with, um, with like joy and energy. Um, like when I, you know, I have been introducing myself on the, um, at these, on these, um, these legislative bills with, you know, sort of like, sort of the same style that when you do a prayer, you know? Okay. Um, so the one that spins the universe into creation, the one that meets us where we are, except I'm, I'm introducing myself that way. So my name is Remington Johnson, you know, I'm the one that cares for those at the bedside of the sick and the dying and this and that. And then I finish with something where, you know, like yesterday I was like, and an absolute smoke show and I've found it. I found just sort of that like claiming of sort of that like, you know, turning it up to 11 and just sort of like being like, yeah, I mean, you guys are going to sit around and say, absolutely vile things about this, about, you know, my body and what I've done to it and how I display it and how I choose to live in the world when like, all that I am is fantastic and getting to sort of like, just like really feel it. I mean, it's, it's crackling energy.

Rev. Kai Greer ([22:26](#)):

The agency are, this is so great. The agency that you talk about Remington it's. So for me, the, every time is like the first time, because every time it's like, this is who I am, and it's so fascinating to me because before claiming myself and claiming my space in the world, I was so nervous. And so like just

traumatized and all these other things when I went into spaces and it was like, uh, is it sir? Or is it ma'am? Is it, uh, it's Kai. And so now that I claim that now that I embrace that the fullness of myself, it's like every time I feel deep joys, like the first time. And so the first time when I accept who I am, and I know who I am, and I love all of who I am it's that just keeps, it, keeps coming back over and over again. And it reminds me of the first time.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([23:29](#)):

I mean, God, it's so beautiful. I mean, I think that's where, I mean, I love to sort of, I think as, as chaplains, you may resonate with this, but I love to borrow, you know, what I call sort of the best parts of everybody's different denominational and religious leanings. And, you know, that is a very sort of like evangelical notion of sort of like name it and claim it. Um, and you know, it's, it's a reason that it feels really good to say, God, I have faith in like, you know what I am and like what I represent in the world and to sort of like, you know, embody that, um, which I think trans folks embody spaces, I think, you know, very, very well because, you know, we have had to, you know, do that navigation, which I think for a lot of us is lifelong.

Nite Hunt ([24:21](#)):

Yeah. I know for me, at least, um, it's honestly like lifting weights is like the first time. Um, cause I played rugby in college and I played, um, first I played with the women's team because, uh, the men's team anyway getting to like be with other bodies that also like are moving and like firing off the same way. Like mine is differently. Cause we're like different positions. Um, our bodies needs to do different things. Like whether it's holding a strong position, quick twitch muscles, but just getting to like have fun and then see other people be strong and like non-traditional, feminine ways of like, um, but getting to support them in that and like getting like to become stronger with them, like over the season and just, um, you know, pushing ourselves and like seeing our bodies change and adapt to the sport. And it was just, it was a lot of fun. So, but just that first time getting to be in the weightlifting room and like working with the trainers and like everyone really testing their limits of like seeing how, how high was a hundred percent. Um, and just like, you know, put on 10 more pounds, put on 10 more pounds. And it was just, it was a lot of fun. So that was, that was the first time, like, it was just fun to be trans because it was just like, it wasn't just that I was trans, but it was like, but everybody in like was defying like traditional, stereotypical, like femininity because it's like, well, women don't lift weights. Some like women don't get buff and, but like seeing the girls like own their bodies and just being like, I'm gonna like have these massive thighs and then I'm going to squat, like 300 pounds, I'm going to squat, like 400 pounds, I'm going to, you know, just however I can go and just, you know, and then when reaching that, it's like, okay, now I'm going to train to lift heavier. I'm going to train to go faster. I'm going to train to hit harder and they're trained to make my catches and my passes smoother. And just, um, so that was, that was, it felt good, like learning my body in those moments.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([29:04](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean, I think, I think, I mean, your example of this is I think you could sort of crosswalk it into like a lot of the other trans experience because you know, what happens in a weight room is we're able to set up a very safe space to push outside of our comfort zone and then find out, you know, more things about ourselves. I mean, you find out a lot about yourself at the bottom of a squat. Um, you know, you find a lot out about go down in that hole and like, if you, you know, sometimes you're just going to sit there cause where you live now. But, but, you know, I think when I think about sort of my own exploration with my gender and my presentation in the world and how I understood myself, it was very similar to that, which is okay, all right, I'm going to go to this store around these friends and I'm

going to like, I'm going to do, I'm gonna, I'm going to like polish this part of myself or I'm gonna, you know, you know, look this way. And then you sort of like, you look around and you say, Ooh, that was rough. I'm feeling a little, a little rung out from that, but that was a thing I did. And you celebrate the actual, you know, sometimes not the actual experience, but the thing that, but the fact that you did it. Um, and I dunno, I just, I really resonate with that thing of sort of like pushing and testing and, and being very curious, but doing it. I think what, what you pointed to was it didn't happen with you alone. You did it in community. Um, I mean, that's, you know, that's sort of how we all exist right. In a community.

Sam Ames ([30:46](#)):

Um, it's so interesting. It makes all of the sense in the world that there is like finally feeling at home in your body. I still have a really complicated relationship with my body. It's not quite home yet. It's like maybe on the way. Um, but it's not there yet, but, but what I do feel really sure about is my relationship to calling, um, my, so my, the first time I felt joy related to being trans I think was because of the worst moment of being trans that moment that I think that we all have where you're just like, you have the meltdown, you have the meltdown. And you're like, okay, this cannot continue. And I didn't say that I had the meltdown in a Ross, um, in a dressing room and my poor partner was with me and I like ran out and I was, I'm not that dramatic. Right. And she was like, what is happening? And I got home and I called, I don't know if any of, you know, Teo Drake, um, Teddy, he, he is one of our brilliant elders. Um, he's a long-term HIV survivor and he teaches Buddhist practice and runs the faith, um, track at Creating Change, which is a big, um, queer conference. I called Teddy and I didn't know Teddy very well. I knew Teddy, his partner, Alex Capitan, who worked in our denomination. I don't know why I called Teddy, but I called Teddy and I was like, I am gonna die. Like I'm freaking out. I something I can't, I don't know. And I didn't have words. And he was like, okay, bud, it's time to start testosterone. You cannot go on this way. Um, and like somehow he very kindly and authentically and faithfully, um, walked me through some of this process that of course I would go on to like have a bunch of medical resistance. And he was like, let's just keep meditating. Let's just keep coming back to breath. We are going to get through this. And he Lord knows, did all of the work 20 years ago so that people like me now, um, have some kind of thing they can go through. The first moment that I got to joy was when I got that call from a kid. Um, and, uh, and like, it was someone who had, uh, who had been so hurt by faith and who absolutely wasn't going to go there in any relationship to it. But I think the great thing that you learn in chaplaincy is that you don't have to talk about God in order to talk about centering, um, and, uh, and finding meaning and value in, in, in chaos and agony. I think that was the, that was the word they used. Um, you know, I it's, it's brutal. I used to, I used to run, I used to be the executive director of an organization called Trans Lifeline. And we had a lot of callers like this who were in that moment. That was the worst moment. Um, and it's, it's brutal. Like I'm looking at the bills in Texas and around the country right now. I think you have 17 there it's nuts. Our youngest caller ever was five. Um, and I am so grateful that the person I had by my side and that my deputy who is now the executive director, um, was a brilliant woman named Marlina Roseveta, who is a minister. I don't think would have been possible to do that work without a minister by my side, because we, because we were able to sit through these absolutely brutal, we'll never forget these awful recordings of calls that I had to either come onto or listen to because we had to make decisions about what we were going to do in those moments. But we also got to hear from our operators and to experience firsthand these revolutionary transformative moments that people got to have through connection to one another. Um, and it felt deeply spiritual to me, it wasn't always language you could use, um, especially not publicly, but like me and Elena, uh, the way that we got through this absolutely brutal job, hardest job I will ever have in my life was finding these moments of trans joy, which exist in part because of how difficult it can be to find them. Um, so I got them, I got it with my first baby trans who called me in panic and is now doing so well, has had, has had so much

transformation in the last two years is smiling in ways I have never seen them. Um, those moments that is just continued joy is, is what keeps me going is knowing that there are more kids like that and that they deserve joy too.

Nite Hunt ([34:53](#)):

Uh, Myles, do you want to jump in?

Myles Markham ([34:57](#)):

I think mine's a little different, I, uh, you know, mentioned earlier, you know, that I had left, you know, the ex-gay movement kind of dabbled in like this celibate gay movement and then moved into a fully affirming space, but it was a lot of survivors of conversion therapy. It was a lot of other folks who had experienced, uh, religious trauma and extreme forms of exclusion. And so, uh, kind of acknowledging my transness, uh, started out in that, uh, painful, very kind of struggle-driven place. And a few years ago, um, in, in the midst of, you know, working in advocacy in the midst of, um, you know, being on call, similar to what Sam mentioned, you know, with folks who are in a very desperate place, uh, I was introduced to a very short-lived, uh, comedy web series by seriously TV called, uh, conversation therapy with Patty Harrison. And I don't think it was more than five episodes and it was really just Patty interviewing other trans, gender nonconforming, and non binary actors, writers, and comedians. And, uh, as simple as it sounds, it showed me a experience and uh, theories of experiences of transness beyond activism beyond struggle beyond trauma, uh, and allowed me to laugh and to feel understood and to be given the space, um, to not have to be so austere about my gender identity and to this day, all those episodes, uh, are a source of joy, not just because of where they entered into my life. Um, but because they are ridiculous and very funny to me. And, and so, um, it, it's joy is newer. Joy is harder for me, but I am finding small ways to feel it as, as I go along.

Nite Hunt ([37:26](#)):

Nice. Y'all have brought up, you know, just the work that it requires to experience joy, right? Like the be in part because of like trauma and like pushing against society. Um, and you know, and just the work that y'all do, um, you know, Roman can work a lot with that. Sam, you work a lot against conversion therapy. Um, Myles, you know, working out of that same space and like Kai is similar, like working, um, in chaplaincy, in chaplaincy. So like getting to see the work that joy requires and the traumas that you encounter, despite all that. Right. Or with respect to not despite, but with respect to that work, like y'all have been talking about just the joy that you could take experience and get to encounter and get to embody. And so, you know, I want to hear more about how do you get to practice joy? Like what, what other practices do you get to experience and do, um, with respect to the challenges that you face and the challenges, you know, that you see other trans folks face to face? Like where do you get to find that? Like, how do, where do those practices of joy come into that? I guess like self-care is like another way of thinking about it too.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([38:38](#)):

Yeah. Uh, oh, I went first, last time. Anybody else want to like percolate that? Otherwise I'm like, I'm like bouncing with energy over here.

Sam Ames ([38:47](#)):

I love your bouncy energy. It's excellent.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([38:55](#)):

Okay. Okay. So I'll run here. So I think you set it up in a really interesting way cause you were like, you know, the work of finding joy and the self care and all that. And for me, work has never been a problem. I am a worker, I am a trier. That's why I didn't transition till I was 30, because I'm going to outwork this. So, you know, I'm a worker I'm, I'm going to like outwork this trans thing or I'm going to outrun it or whatever. So for me, um, you know, one of the phrases of, one of my chaplain supervisors always rings with the, I saw her going to this PA this patient's room dying of cancer. It's very close to the end and she sat down close to him and she goes, all right, it's time to rest into this. And I thought it was really, and you just watched his whole countenance just relax. And for me, my self care, my sort of work of joy is to just rest into the existence that I have. And there's going to be times to fight and work and do all that. And, but, but those, those, that continual sort of like up springing of joy that I get to experience is always there. I just have to rest into it. Um, and so for me, that's, that's what it looks like for me, it's, it's a less of a sort of like, uh, you know, you give me a task, I'm going to do that. Um, which may actually drive me farther away from that resting into sort of that sort of, that, that divine spark, uh, which is sort of inside of us.

Rev. Kai Greer ([40:35](#)):

A huge part of, I guess, where I, um, find joy where I live in that space of joy is laughter. Um, my we've laughed a lot on this, on this conversation already. My wife and I laugh a lot. Uh, so laughter is like a huge part of just living in that space with joy. The other, I it's, it's been mentioned a couple of times while we've been talking is remembering that we are not the first, there have been generations and generations before us living and laughing and loving just as we have found joy in, in our lives. And so remembering that community, that, that came before us that lives with us now that is to come remembering and laughing, helped me just embrace, embrace that joy even, I guess, alongside of, like you said, alongside of the challenges. Yeah. Because that's, that's there too. We're living, we're living them simultaneously all the time.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([41:41](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's the laughter piece. I mean, I think I sometimes sort of like look at, at my particular trans experience and just laugh at the absurdity of it in a way where it's not judgmental. Right. It's not, you know, but it's just sort of like,

Myles Markham ([42:01](#)):

What do I do with this?

Nite Hunt ([42:05](#)):

I feel that, um, I like one of the, my favorite thing to do with like other trans folks or like being in other spaces, it's just like crack jokes about it because it's, it is funny. And I think it's like a lovely type of absurd that like cis folks don't get to experience or understand. Um, and it is, it's just a lot of fun of like, um, I used to have the lovely privilege of working in fast food with my roommate. I no longer work in fast food, but, um, for a moment there, like we were working together and we were just like each other's lifeline of like getting to just pass by each other and like take a breath every time we see each other. Um, and so, uh, one of the things we had to do, like this is my favorite moment of joy, um, because both me and my roommate are trans, uh, is open up a big ol', like five gallon bucket of pickles.

Nite Hunt ([42:57](#)):

And it was just cracking pickle jokes. The whole time was wonderful. And my roommate just being like, we need the pickles. And then I was like, I got the pickles. And then my roommate being like, you don't have any pickles. And that's like, and my roommate loves pickles and I hate pickles. So just, it was like, you know, insanely busy, full screen of orders. You're like 10 minutes behind. And just getting to make like pickle jokes in the freezer was wonderful. Um, but of course, like no one else understands that. And like me and my roommate just like standing there, looking at each other, making these sandwiches and like laughing to get through like the shift, like it's like little moments like that of just, you know, you can kind of just make absurd comments about being trans because it's fun. Like you just get to make fun of gender. So yeah, no, I feel that like getting to have that laughter like, you know, like that deep in your stomach laughter that like you have to pee afterwards.

Sam Ames ([43:57](#)):

Like what you're describing is so similar humor that I, like there is, there is a kind of depth of, well, everything is dying and dead that like there's no, you can't, you can't do anything. If you don't laugh, sometimes you will cry always,

Rev. Kai Greer ([44:16](#)):

Always. Sure, Sure, sure.

Myles Markham ([44:19](#)):

The thing is haven't taken care of your [crosstalk], you go ahead. I was just going to make a pelvic floor joke.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([44:30](#)):

Well, I want to leave space for that.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([44:34](#)):

I think that the laughter piece is really fun. So I am engaged to a cis woman. And so we always joke that, um, you know, that I have the super power of being in, you know, of being raised a confident white boy. And so I didn't get any of the like toxic indoctrination that like girls get about their bodies and like messages from society and all that. Instead, I just get all this unearned confidence and now I get to like, you know, so we get to just joke about sort of like, well, you know, if you were raised this way, you'd be a little more concerned, but like you weren't. So you just, you gotta be joyful and happy because you've never had a parent be like, is that what you're gonna wear to leave the house? You know, thank you. Gift what a gift. Um, yeah, you're good. I, um, skip all those, those, uh, bummer parts of, um, of the female experience.

Sam Ames ([45:29](#)):

Remington. I feel like I am a little like you in that I am a worker and like, just we'll, we'll do that. Um, the problem is I'm also a crasher, um, and I crash hard and I think that is the thing when you work hard. Um, and when I was, when I was running trans lifeline, I was also in school full-time getting my theology degree. I do not recommend this combination of things. I would like wake up, go to class with a suitcase, get on a train down to, uh, something event and go to a fundraiser and like make it back up on an airplane in time for class. The next morning do not do this. There's a reason that I crashed here. Um, but my mentor at the time was Cornell West. He was a professor at, um, at my divinity school and, uh, was

really, really into trans people, which I did not know about him coming into this, but I was really grateful for it.

Sam Ames ([46:23](#)):

And he, um, was really, really adamant, aggressively adamant about, uh, revolutionary joy, um, that it was our responsibility, particularly as faith leaders. And I, there was this one, there was this one, um, really rough week. We had like three bills happen. Uh, Trump announced the trans ban on Twitter and like, and they tried to take us out of UN documents for whatever reason. Um, the third thing happens that I don't even care to try to remember right now. Um, and I did, I'd done an interview with, um, with Teen Vogue that a Nazi website had picked up and I woke up in the morning and I had all these emails. Um, and like, it's my name next to a picture of a noose, right? Like this is not a Nazis are not nice about these things. And I have been to have a meeting with Dr. West that day and I went into his office and I don't know what we were supposed to talk about what it was out the window. I was like, how the do they have increased security for me? Which they had already increased for you? How do you deal with this all the time you are being stalked all the time. I had like one Nazi after me and I'm like, this is destroying my life. Um, and he didn't miss a beat. He was like, you get a soundtrack and you start with a Aretha. I was like, all right, the next day I came in and he had an entire soundtrack that I just like, I have it on a Spotify list. Um, it starts with a Aretha and it goes through the experience of agony and joy just over and over and over again. Um, and I don't like, I don't know how I could've gotten through that without, without some kind of joy in my life.

Sam Ames ([48:01](#)):

And he was absolutely right. Um, and he was annoying about it and he kept going about it, uh, and bothering me. And it was exactly right. And what I needed, because if you don't have joy doing, doing work around your own identity and around the brutality on your own identity and the brutality on people who have your identity and a bunch of others that are just being brutalized in ways that you control a little bit of, but mostly not. Um, it will destroy you just like I'm not built to be a hospital chaplain. I loved my year of service and, and also it takes a real kind of specific human being. I think, Kai, you said you've been doing this for 15 years. Like good Lord respect. I could not do that.

Rev. Kai Greer ([48:41](#)):

Well, that's Remington.

Sam Ames ([48:44](#)):

Great super humans, two of you. But like, I, I remember trying to find joy in it and I was too worn down. I am less worn down by testifying against horrible bills targeting kids then somehow I, I hospital chaplaincy, which is a beautiful experience at heart. And, um, and the, the joy is, I think, I think it's our gift. I think it's the only way to get through it. I got to that last week, I got to spend some time in nature after a year, been in quarantine for a year of really strict quarantine and I was vaccinated and could go. The first thing I did was hike. I was just like, get me into nature. I don't want to see anybody, I don't want to hug anybody, just let me take a goddamn hike. And I spent a week in Santa Cruz and talking to the gods and yelling at the ocean, which I'm told is a prayer with a really long tradition, which is lucky for me because if I keep yelling at God, I feel like, uh, there should be somebody else who tells me, I'm not, I'm not going to the hell. We don't believe in. Um, but there's this, like there was this, I finally experienced joy for the first time in a year in this way. And it was how I got through these. It is such a gift to do this

work. It is a privilege and an honor to be called to do this work. And holy shit, it sucks sometimes. And the only way, the only way, and the responsibility we have is, is finding revolutionary joy.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([50:04](#)):

Yeah. Oh God, everything, everything you said same. It's just, it just like moves me. And it makes me think of, you know, in the hospital environment, we talk a lot about caregiver burnout and what happens to folks as they burn out from this. And one of the things that happens in a healthcare encounter is one it's very vulnerable, right? I mean, you strip a patient naked, you put them in your you're like, you know, they're in, you know, especially if it's the hospital, this is my house. You are a visitor in my house. I've taken your clothes and all your stuff. And now you're in my bed in my house. And, you know, the power dynamics are all over the place and, you know, healthcare anyway, it's prime to be a very sorrowful, you know, painful, you know, environment, but what they find in caregiver resilience is that the, one of the first things that people that burn out lose is they lose all the free things that happen in that encounter between one person and another. And it made me think of that revolutionary joy piece that you talked about. And in particular, that, that, that experience you had when you were hiking, where I think with trans folks, we are more primed because of a number of reasons to be able to be very intentional about recognizing all the free things that can bring us joy, getting to leave that, you know, getting to just leave the house in the morning, looking however I look, gives me a little bit of joy, um, you know, getting to see myself in the morning mirror, not always, but sometimes can give me a little bit of joy, um, or just like, you know, it just, it just reminded me of just all those little free things where just sort of like the way we take up space in the world can offer us sort of like just those little, the little things that sort of go, oh, God is good. I'm glad I'm around. I like being around good deal. Thumbs up 10 out of 10 would do it again.

Nite Hunt ([52:01](#)):

Yeah. Um, so just a note on time, it is, uh, 10:39. And so I want to respect y'all's time and your hour. And again, thank you all for being here, but before I let you all go, um, would y'all have any closing comments you would like to say, you know, like any last tidbits, a sentence or two about, about, you know, joy, you know, saying to trans folks about accessing joy, giving joy, getting to live in joy, you know, or even, or even just, you know, surviving until you get to those moments of joy, you know, or just like, how would you wait that out? So any, um, if you all would like to say a sentence or two I'd love that before we close.

Rev. Remington Johnson ([52:45](#)):

So one of the things that we found out after the 9/11 terrorist attacks was that, um, thinking about trauma, doesn't, isn't super helpful. Our brains are too good at actually painting the picture. Our limbic system will re escalate. We'll get fight-or-flight and all that, and just traumatize ourselves all over again. Right. And I think trans folks, we know that very explicitly. So you know, sort of my recommendation to sort of like the trans community and just people in general, is that what they learned was is that if you can focus on what you did during the trauma, in response to the trauma, then you actually come away with a very positive moment of sort of like self building and a moment of joy. So it can be very small from being mis-gendered in the grocery store and how you reacted. And again, it, you know, the deal is like the fact that you, you, you know, maybe you dropped all your groceries and ran well, then you get to celebrate the fact that look, that thing happened and I still exist. Look at me. Um, and so, you know, it can be little or four, or maybe you did, maybe you went and picked up a donut, um, and a soda, and like, whatever else, because you were like, look, if I'm going to be here and be mis-gendered, I'm going to get more things, because I don't want to have to come back here for a little while, but it's what you focus

on, on your power and the fact that you had action in that encounter. Um, and I think for me, that's a lot of where my joy comes from is focusing on the fact that I am a creature with agency and action. And so reflecting on those moments of agency and action makes me feel joyful.

Nite Hunt ([54:24](#)):

Nice. Thank you for sharing. Thank you.

Rev. Kai Greer ([54:27](#)):

Yeah. So in addition to that, for me, it's like seeing the little sparks, so, or experiencing the little sparks, right? So like, I'm not good with raising children, but I have a house full of animals, so that brings me joy. Um, and because also animals are the best things, because they don't care what your gender or your orientation, or the way you look in the morning, or how bad your poop smells, they don't care. So, um, um, it's those little things. So I would, I would just say, um, hold on. Don't, don't squeeze them to death, but hold on to those little things, uh, I would say, I would say, find, find what makes you spark, um, um, recognize the trauma, recognize the pain and, and then go back to that thing. That even if it's a second, even if it's just hold onto it.

Sam Ames ([55:32](#)):

I think I, I just want to, like, everybody keeps talking about this still small voice. That's like Quaker thing that I love so much. Um, and, and I think that there is something beautiful in it related particularly to trans people that there is this thing that transformation, not just transgender, not just gender, but transformation lives in our skin. We, we like, we transformed this chaos and this agony into gifts to the world, even when we don't like fully believe that the world deserves it. Like there are those days, let's be real. Our nature is to transform pain into gifts. Um, and it, and, and this transformation, it, it, it also like it compels us towards something better, um, towards something our culture gives us no permission or logic for. Um, but that there is this truth that we know is true, that is nagging and insistent and will not let us go. And there is something about that that is just faith. Um, whether you're a person of faith or not that we have a truth that we know how to hold onto, even when there is no support for it coming our way. Um, we, we, aren't just rooted in this kind of faith. That is a gift to the world. There is something inherent in us that is divine. And if we humans are going to like reverse the destruction and annihilation, and even maybe move forward as a global species, trans people are non-negotiable, our, our lives are revolutionary and holding on to our lives is a revolution. And, um, and I think that you cannot hold onto life without finding, uh, without finding joy in that life. And so joy is also part of our responsibility to the world.

Nite Hunt ([57:21](#)):

Thank you for sharing.

Myles Markham ([57:23](#)):

Yeah. I think the only thing I would add is that, uh, for people, um, that, uh, emotions maybe generally are hard to access I'm, I'm one of them. Um, I feel like that was one of the biggest detriments to my wellbeing that happened in, you know, those earlier years of, um, exclusionary, uh, spirituality being able to, um, cultivate something that is, as, you know, it can be as big, you know, as joy or even just amorphous. Like, what is it, where does it begin? You know, that kind of thing, um, can be overwhelming. And so I really liked, uh, what my colleagues here have said, you know, around, I like the word that Kai used spark. I think something that's helped me on my road to healing has been identifying

delight, um, because that is, um, much easier for me to access, um, because it's usually oriented around, you know, cute people and cute animals and cute moments and able to, to see that and to feel that, and to not feel any embarrassment, you know, around or over, you know, what is causing, you know, that sensation, I think has been really huge for me and, um, has, has helped me learn, you know, what, what joy is and what it feels like and what it looks like. And so, yeah, but find the spark, find, identify delight. I think those kinds of things do go a really long way.

Nite Hunt ([59:13](#)):

Thank you again, all for being here, all for conversating with each other. I really appreciate y'all's time and bringing your full selves here. Like, I appreciate the different stories and like, you know, the honesty that you got to share here. So I just want to say thank you again. Um, and I will leave y'all to the rest of y'all's beautiful stormy weathering days or sunshine days if you live in California, I guess. Yes. Thank you.

Rev. Kai Greer ([59:41](#)):

Thank you. Be well beloved.

Myles Markham ([59:43](#)):

Thank you. Bye bye.