

Nite ([02:16](#)):

Hello! I'm Night Hunt! My pronouns are he him. And this is Our Table: Trans Spirituality Conversations. Our Table, is a project of enflesh, where we create spiritual nourishment for collective liberation. You can learn more about our work at enfleshed.com. As the transfer intern at enflesh. I'm excited to be the host of Our Table an audio project that brings trans people together to have the spiritual and religious conversations we want to have on our own terms. Our Table will be made up of four conversations each with a different theme and different guests. Today, we're talking about God and gender with our phenomenal guests, Reverend Elena Cobb, Rev M Barclay, and Enrique Cintron.

Nite ([02:56](#)):

For those of us who reject the idea that God is a man, the typical alternative is to claim God is like a woman. This can be an important claim in its own right. It's a subversive and a very clear job against the common patriarchal.

Nite ([03:08](#)):

God who is used to align with established white male powers. However, even as we celebrate and maybe even connect with elements of this theology, today, want to push farther exploring notions of god as transgender. God as non-binary. God as ever changing and always becoming. We want to break open up the cis hetero binary boxes of gender related theologies and spiritualities. We have questions about the pros and cons of associating God with gender, the limitations of thinking God in this way, and the importance of images and symbols that connect our lived experiences with divinity. But first let's begin with some introductions. Uh, M would you like to start?

M Barclay ([03:47](#)):

Sure. Uh, my name is M like the letter and my pronouns are they/them. Uh, I am, I am, uh, ordained in the United Methodist church. It's a very fraught and complicated identity for me. Uh, but I, um, I aligned with mystic and liberation, uh, and, queer, um, and poetic, um, realms of theology and spirituality, um, and the places they aligned with activism and organizing and, uh, trying to be good humans together.

Nite ([04:26](#)):

Thank you. Um, Y'all popcorn for introductions.

Alaina Cobb ([04:32](#)):

Sure. I'll go. Um, my name is Reverend Elena Cobb. Um, Reverend isn't actually my name, that's just the title, but, um, I am the pastor and director of Sanctuary, um, a, um, space that is held for queer liberation and social justice work in Nashville, Tennessee. Um, I am a poet and activist of course. Um, and an anti-fascist, um, oh, and a mom, I guess, I guess I shouldn't leave my kids out. Um, and so yeah, a lot of things, many things to many people.

Enrique Cintron ([05:14](#)):

Um, I am Enrique Cintron. I use they/them/theirs pronouns. Um, I'm queer and Latinx. I describe myself as a Themologian, um, because I am a they/them that does theology. Um, I'm a writer, um, occasional preacher, um, and they, let me say things in the pulpit. Um, I host a podcast called the fruits of the spirit where I, um, interviewed and trans people of color about their faith journeys and their walks with God.

And I'm also a spiritual director providing, uh, accompaniment and spiritual care to and trans people. Um, and it's really great.

Alaina Cobb (05:53):

And I'm the bad trans woman who forgot to share pronouns. She/her for me.

group (05:57):

laughter from folks

Nite (06:01):

Uh, thank you all for introducing yourselves. I'm very excited about like the broadness we have in the room and like, you know, y'all coming from different walks of life. So, but let's get started with the first question. Uh, what would y'all consider to be a moment in your faith, religion, spirituality, uh, that felt like home to you if it ever has.

Alaina Cobb (06:26):

I'll go ahead and go. Um, so a moment that feels like home to me. Um, so there's, there's two things really that, that, um, come to mind when I think of when my faith has felt like home, um, and those moments are moments where I see people like myself, I manage to find people like myself in scripture. Um, when I sort of sort through and manage that in some way, I think, um, shares my identities, um, whatever those may be at the moment and whatever those might look like, um, uh, on any given day, um, you know, but finding myself in scripture, um, and finding a way to navigate that is something that really feels like home to me. And then the other thing is something I probably only ever described to anybody once. So I guess I should share it with a large audience, um, is this fact as I have as a very intense, very personal practice, um, that I developed when I was very young, um, I was raised in the church and the daughter of ministers.

Alaina Cobb (07:44):

Um, and so I was always in church, always in church. Um, and, um, but I moved around a lot. Um, so the sanctuary ended up feeling about as close to home as, as anywhere to, that's probably how my, uh, ministry got its name, but, um, when I'm, when I'm really, really down and I'm really feeling, um, lost, I will find a church. It doesn't matter what, uh, which is a little bit dangerous for trans women themselves, but I will find any church. I will enter the sanctuary and I will sit and I will imagine all the prayers that have gone unanswered. Um, and in that moment, imagining all these people coming in and all these prayers that haven't been answered. I don't know. There's just a, uh, a solidarity in, um, knowing that we are all at times lost.

M Barclay (08:46):

That's really beautiful.

Enrique Cintron (08:49):

Yeah. Yeah.

M Barclay (08:54):

hm hm. It makes me think about like the, I remember when I was younger and, um, I fell at home and church in ways that I haven't in well over a decade now. Um, but at a time it felt like home. Um, when I was a different person, when my beliefs were different, my politics were different, but the sitting in the sanctuary, I remember like I was involved enough in my church that I would like be around after everything else closed. And so I would have access to the like completely empty, completely, still sanctuary, and it felt so, so sacred. Um, and I, I love what you just brought into that. Um, but I, I think ever gosh, in the last 10 years, it's hard to think of any kind of moment other than like fleeting kind of connections with people that I, I share, like all of the, or enough of the elements that I need to be represented in spirituality and faith now to really feel at home in myself or in it. Um, and those, those connections, those meeting spaces, those conversations are always, um, temporary, uh, and extremely temporary, I guess it's always temporary and pretty much all the ways, but in a, um, not an ongoing space in any way. Yeah.

Nite ([10:22](#)):

I, I never, I spent a lot of time at church also, um, cause like my great-grandmother and like my grandma for awhile were Southern Baptist. And so I remember, oh, and then on my Samoan side, like you got to go to the ward. And so, like I remember like with the other kids, cause my, my grandma on my dad's side was very involved and I was always a bit off-put by like, the Mormon churches, but I liked hanging out with the kids. I remember like being there after hours, you know, like with the kids and you're running around the gymnasium where you're like running in circles and playing hide and seek. And I always felt like I was ghost hunting, which is like, I know it doesn't sound like, like, not as like yall, like this was like, holy and then, you know, you're talking about like being present there, but I always felt like I was going to like, you know, see someone praying or like, you know, kind of like spy something I wasn't supposed to see, not like in a bad way of just being like, you know, like, and, um, in the wards there's like a lot of doors and there's like a lot of rooms and pockets.

Nite ([11:30](#)):

So it was always kind of like peeking in to see like, if I was going to get like thrown off to a different world, but then being in like other churches, like when I would go to like a Baptist church, it was like very open. And like, there's like usually one or two hallways, but it's a very open space. So I was always like looking up or like seeing like how people kind of sectioned themselves off and then like peeking into conversations and kind of like trying to find the same thing, just like little tidbits of something there, um, of like what people were doing. It's not the homiest thing. But I think about that like now, cause like for, I don't much pray to God anymore, but like for me, it's like, I imagine when my grandma prays, God listens. So I'm like, all right, grandma, you got to pray for me because I don't have much conversations to have with God.

Alaina Cobb ([12:25](#)):

That sense of comfort, you know, have when you're not old enough to know that you're unwanted and in space, um, or that you don't even know yourself. That's true. You know? Um, that's, um, there's a certain, um, essence to that of, of, you know, maybe what, what Jesus would call childlike faith. And that is, that is, uh, a belief that, that the people around you love you, um, even, even should it not be the case. Um, it's a, it's a childlike understanding that the world is there for exploration and joy there.

Enrique Cintron ([13:11](#)):

Wow.

New Speaker ([13:11](#)):

My heart.

Enrique Cintron ([13:13](#)):

I love that.

Nite ([13:14](#)):

But speaking of like the love of God and like the childlike exploration, um it's - so when I hear those words, I usually don't think of that as like the typical masculine God released the God, not the God I grew up with. It was like, it wasn't that you could explore God. It was that God knew. All right. And like you had to learn. And so like to me, like that's another way of seeing as God as gender. And so the question I have for y'all is like, when you, like, how does, how does or does not God have a gender? And like, how do you think that impacts the way you do theology now? Um, or like how y'all do cause yeah, cause you're all kind of theologians here doing some parts of that. So like, I am sure like the evolution of thinking of God, even having a gender and then going through, you know, the gender stuff with God, like how has that played out for y'all?

Alaina Cobb ([14:18](#)):

I'd like to hear from the themologian. Definitely, on this one

Enrique Cintron ([14:26](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I think for me, um, I grew up in a very like devout Roman Catholic high school or high school, um, Roman Catholic background. I did go to a Roman Catholic, uh, high school though. Um, you know, I was raised with this very like strict kind of like image of God as this kind of angry old man in a cloud somewhere, um, who had to send his son to die for our sins and you know, like lots of images of like a very vengeful, like angry God. Um, and I think for me, like part of the liberating process for me was kind of leaving church for a little bit and being exposed to other religious ways of knowing. And then when I eventually did come back to Christianity, it kind of allowed me to kind of think about, okay, like actually this image that I inherited, you know, I don't think that is like that at all. I don't think that is a man, especially not like an angry old man, like that is so much more than that. Um, and I think as I began to, um, kind of really discover my own sense of, uh, my gender, my non-binary identity that in turn made me think about the ways that, you know, God for me transcends gender. Um, I think of course like it's, it makes it easier to relate to God when we assign God a pronoun. Um, but for me it's just like thinking about how is my own lived experience reflective of this greater divine reality, um, that is beyond all these different concepts that we have.

M Barclay ([16:20](#)):

It feels so complicated to me it's like, a both and, a pro con kind of element to, to anything that, uh, has power in our world, right? Like for a long time it was so healing and helpful to me to like start using feminine language for God like that. That was a whole, that was a whole like saving shift for me. Um, that changed so much about, um, everything, about my practice of spirituality and religion at the time, because my whole life was changing as I was addressing like sexist power dynamics and my like how that has shaped my own becoming and everything. And so like, there are so many ways that I think, uh, relating to divinity through the reality of, uh, politics and material experiences of power, um, through everything. But gender included, uh, is so important. And I'm at a point where I feel like I also want to get it. It's not even a getting past it. It's like not wanting to do identity, identity politics and their worst

liberal sense with divinity, right. It's like, I want to associate God more with like the actions than the social markers. Um, and so how to kind of keep all of that together. Um, it just always feel, I feel unsatisfied, no matter what approach I kind of take, you know...

Alaina Cobb ([17:59](#)):

I am, sorry, my cat, um, I tend to think of God. Um, I'm very Penn in the cause I'm being honest, um, in that, in my experience of God and my belief about God is that God is in and through all things, uh, to take a beat from Paul who was taking a beat from the Greeks. Um, but, um, and so in that way, I definitely, my understanding of God has God has, um, you know, God has gender full. And in that, in that way, to those who are without gender, those who are agender or God is as much, uh, agender, you know, there's, there's all this, um, room, this galaxy of, of gender. And I see God in all of it. And yet there's another part of me that probably that, that speaks more to the liberation theology. Um, and you know, we, we talk about a preferential option for the poor about God having a preferential option for the poor, the gospel being a preferential option for the poor. But really, I think that's, that's speaking directly to the preferential option for the oppressed. And so I see God, and I think the way we talk about God needs to be shaped, um, by those systems, because unless we're identifying God with whatever gender is being oppressed or whatever person is being oppressed in whichever situation, then the least the less honest view we have of God. Um, if we truly believe, uh, you know, if you're a Christian, you truly believe that the most honest example of God and the grace and sample of God that we have in scripture is, uh, you know, a God who is crucified, um, that, and is in that oppressed state then, um, you know, my God can definitely look like a man, but it's not going to be a man in power. It's going to be Emmett Till, you know, my God can look like a woman. Um, but it's, it's not going to be, um, you know, my God is always going to be, um, it's always going to be gendered in a way that, um, makes me question and it doesn't leave me comfortable. Um, and not in a way that I feel like God is in a position of oppression and power over, but who am I oppressing? Um, uh, that is, that is the question I have to ask myself. And that is how I should see God. Um, as the, who am I? Who am I, um, right now, who am I exercising power over, even if it's unintentional.

Nite ([21:02](#)):

Wow, this is, it brings - me, it makes me think about like the reflection of God. And, um, I grew up learning about that, you know, from church and from my grandma's like, um, we're created in God's image. So therefore, you know, you want to live your life as a reflection to God in the best way possible. And then, you know, if you sin and Jesus already took care of that. But what to me is most interesting when I hear y'all talking about is like, you know, the stepping away from, and then stepping in or stepping into different parts of understanding of God. Um, and then that reflecting on to the different genders, God can inbody, I'm using air quotes around inbody. Um, but I am curious about how has your gender like, cause there's this some satisfaction I hear just like, you know, this evolution of, you know, maybe God has gender or, you know, God being reflected in different ways, but has there been an unsatisfied, like a type of unsatisfaction you get when you deal with like God having any gender or like trying to reflect, like having that conversation of like, who am I talking to? And then like, but how am I talking to you? How you're understanding me, you know, when you're navigating the world as a certain gender or not having a certain gender, um, to, to kind of specify the question with an example of like, when I started imagining God as trans, that was really important for me because it was like, okay, now to me, like, cause I want, like, I just want to fist fight God. Like, that's why I studied theology of like, like people are like, why do you want to do it? Like funding on a Sierra on a fist fight, God, like I'm trying to go to heaven to fist fight. Like this isn't a metaphorical thing. Like this is a brawl we're having in a back alley. But anyway, um, but when I imagine God has transgender, it was like a whole new world opened

up for me because it was like, okay, now I can see God understanding both like my life growing up as a girl, but also the way in which I'm trying to live life as a man. Um, and like how it's always in flux and in conversation even for myself. So it looks like I'm always trying to be, I guess, confrontational with God about it. So how does that do, does that work for y'all or like, is it, you know, does it like reflect that way or?

Alaina Cobb ([23:33](#)):

And does that, I just want to take a second and say, I understand the idea of, uh, getting into theology, uh, wanting to best by God. I actually have a very, very short, like four, four line poem. Uh, it goes, uh, my greatest secret. I only work for God so that I can get close enough that they won't see the knife. Um, you know, um, yeah, there's, there's there's steps, I think to it like removing gender from God. Um, so that we can get distance. Like it's, like you were saying, like, can you say that we can get distance. Um, and then, um, I think at least for me personally, it was when I could rediscover myself and rediscovered feeling comfortable, feeling gender euphoria, feeling and understanding of my gender, that, that wasn't painful. And that, um, allowed me to, to understand the joy of it, where I didn't want to remove that joy from God, and I didn't want to separate that anymore.

Alaina Cobb ([24:48](#)):

And, uh, and, um, so I understand that that like, that need to pull away from a gender God. Um, and I think that's holy. I think that's beautiful, you know, I think that's part of God. Um, they, uh, the thing for me is, you know, I've just come to a point in my personal experience of God that I want, I want to experience all the genders that God God can have. Um, and even those just, you know, non-gendered moments of a mystic revelation, you know, uh, where I'm experiencing God is everything. Um, but, um, yeah,

M Barclay ([25:32](#)):

Yeah, I resonate with that. Like, I want all the kinds, all the kinds of God, um, and you know, and saying, and that I think we from both knowing y'all, and then also Elena, what you've already been talking to, like when we say all we don't actually all doesn't mean all actually all means all in terms of like, at least for me, uh, uh, navigating power dynamics intentionally, right? Like again, God is, um, I, I will not, um, seek out, uh, uh, dominant gender, uh, gendered experience of, of divinity. Like that's, you know, that's not what I'm looking for, but all the other kinds, like, I wanna, I want a little bit of all of that. And I I'm thinking about how much the conversation and in churches specifically comes up around like, uh, pronoun use for God and how frustrating I find it when, um, especially when it says people just want to like remove all pronouns, like just to kind of avoid exactly these complications, right? Like when much more for me, like, I want to hear, she/her for divinity, I want to hear they/them, I want to hear a Ze. I want to like, get to experience spiritually, all these different kinds of like trying on and imagining whatever that, that brings up and whoever that brings into their room. Right. Um, and yeah, so I just, on another day I might be like, I don't want y'all to just keep using these pronouns either. Like, I don't know. I just, it's, it's never quite enough. And probably because the church is completely like failing at actually thinking of God through any trans trans wisdom or experience. Um, and so I think that just makes me feel extra complicated all the time about how gender is used in church, um, in relationship to God. But yeah,

Enrique Cintron ([27:46](#)):

I think for me kind of relating to the kind of ongoing discourse around God's pronouns, I think it's also like the kinds of images we use for God too. And how they're it's like a lot of them are still very traditionally masculine. Um, when it's like, the Bible is full of all of these different kinds of images, some are feminine. Some also just, you know, are not masculine or feminine. Um, and that, to me, like, I, I think there's such a, like, uh, we're missing out on like so many different ways to get at this thing that we call God, because we're so fixated on like the powerful majestic, mighty God. Who's like, you know, apparently this like super macho guy and it's like, no, God is also like super nourishing and also pulls away and it's mysterious and generative and all of these different qualities. Um, and I think that that relates to the gender piece a little bit as well. Um, you know, when you think about these like very traditional masculine images that are used

Alaina Cobb ([28:59](#)):

And coming off that and started, I don't know why, but what you said, sort of remind me of, um, the fact that I can iconography, um, it is something that, you know, we don't have nearly as much in, in the Protestant church. Um, we do, uh, sometimes it's Thomas and K God help us. Um, but, um, but you know, we kind of even, you know, these, these ancient icons and some of the, you know, earliest icons of the resurrection and the womb in Jesus' side is a volva, uh, you know, from where blood and water flowed was an image of birth, you know, uh, and, and, um, and in removing, you know, our ability to talk in, in, um, metaphor, in our ability to talk in a sort of visual metaphor, you know, like, like they do with, um, iconography, um, I think we rob ourselves, um, and just like you're saying with scripture, there are so many, so much, there is so much different iconography to be found. Um, and yet we only focus on the things that, um, a lot of times are reflect our own culture, um, and reflect the patriarchy that we, we live under. Um, because those are the ones that are easy to plug into, and they're not the ones that challenge us. Um, and they're not the ones, um, especially for those of us of marginalized genders are not the ones that a lot of times they're empowering and healing, they reify a patriarchal notion. So, um, you know, yeah.

Nite ([30:55](#)):

Um, this is a great segue, especially like iconography, um, into something that's like has been brimming, um, is like, especially just with iconography itself and like metaphors is those have very institutionalized meanings, right? Like there are set meaning, so certain icons, certain happenings, um, like just in most Christian spaces, like God on the cross and like, and even the different ways God's on the cross and sometimes are not God, Jesus on the cross of justice. Um, sometimes he has the, the thorns, sometimes he doesn't. Um, I know in some places I've seen him with the wounds sometimes not. Um, so even like, but certain spaces have institutionalized iconography and then, you know, the pushback against that of like, okay, now I'm creating different images. And so I wonder, cause y'all are professionals in this field and, um, especially for Enrique, right? You, you come at it with a different angle for like trans folks who are maybe stepping out of an institution. So I wonder how have y'all had to parlay with, um, gendered norms that are like expected of you in some way, and like, how do y'all make, how do y'all deal with that of like having yourself, but then like having to do work and then having your truth?

Enrique Cintron ([32:25](#)):

That's I love this question. Um, I think so I'm, I'm currently, um, I'm in the process to get ordained in my denomination in the Episcopal church. And, um, there are like a small growing number of like non binary people in our ordained ministry in my denomination, but it's still very, very, very, very, very small. Um, and it's something that I think about a lot, um, just because people's traditional view of a priest, um, for a long time as a man and then, you know, recently in the seventies, at least in my denomination, they let

women become priests. Um, and you know, I often get comments from people around like, well, what are you going to let people call you when you become more dated? Because in my denomination, we usually refer to priests as either father or mother. Um, and, um, you know, I was like, well, pastor is fine. Pastor is a gender neutral title, you know? Um, or Reverend like either of those is fine and somebody wants told me, well, someone might have a pastoral need to call you father. And I was like, I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure if that's a pastoral need necessarily. Right. Um, and so like, I think it's just an ongoing conversation for me, kind of like reflective of the larger institution of like, I, for me, like have had to really begin to make space for myself and to push back against those kinds of expectations, just because like, it, like, the culture for me is not going to change unless I like begin pushing, you know, folks when they come with those kinds of comments or beliefs or whatever it is, um, just being able to push back on it. Um, yeah. And I mean, I think there was like a kind of like subconscious, like cultural thing with Episcopalians where, like they have an aversion to like using the word pastor for some reason. They're like, no, like either father or mother, but like I'm going to be called pastor and that's of the discussion.

M Barclay ([34:53](#)):

Good for you. Yeah. I love you said you were making space for yourself and I really resonate with that. I think I'm just choosing to spend a lot less time and energy in spaces where I don't feel the freedom to be fully myself. Like I did that for a while. Um, and it's especially because there's just so few of us everywhere. I mean, like in all the Christian spaces, right? Like, uh, even on my best days. If I'm the only one in a room and I'm having to field all of the cis nonsense from left and right. Like there's no way for that not to wear on me, you know? And for me not to like tap into the, the stuff I've worked so hard to overcome, right. As a trans person, like, it's just really easy for me to get small again. Um, if I am doing so much, uh, doing too much without other folks who do see me for who I am or other folks who are trans in the space. And so, um, life is short. And so like for me, what I have learned I need is to do, um, to do more work in spaces that I create, um, with, with chosen folks, um, and inviting others, um, inviting people to learn and stepping out on occasion, going back to those hard spaces, certainly on occasion, I value that work deeply. Um, but doing less of it for me has become, um, a part of, uh, yeah, just my own spiritual practice.

Nite ([36:34](#)):

I'm glad, I'm glad y'all are making space for that because I think that's something that isn't seen like within popular media and at least I didn't get to see until I started working with and fleshed of like how, like Panjabi all those spaces are, which I really appreciate with like, y'all being here. And like, I'll talking about this as, because it feels real versus like, oh, this could be happening. Right. Or like, it's, it has to be happening somewhere, but it's like, okay, it's happening right here. Like there are people doing it. Um, which does lead me to the next question I have for y'all of where do y'all, it's an M and like, the conversation has touched on it before. It was like the conversation with God and gender tends to get stuck on just pronouns. Like it's like, okay, they're pronouns for God. And then that's it. And then it's like, we don't really go beyond that for talking about God and gender. Um, like y'all have been talking about the ways we've already been imagining gender of like how to express joy through that. Right. And so I wonder how, how do you all see that to be more in a liberation sense for going back and more traditional spaces and traditional communities? Like, how do you think it would work?

Alaina Cobb ([37:57](#)):

So how do you, so the question is how do we feel that our understanding of, uh, the gender or the queerness of the divine, um, would enrich traditional understandings or, and enrich traditional church spaces?

Nite ([38:18](#)):

Okay. Either one really of just like, how do you think the like, liberation theology and using God as like, as part of not, not necessarily as part of your imagination, but like, as part of you to do the work in both like spaces, but also like for people, whether it be like traditional spaces or like spaces y'all currently work in,

Alaina Cobb ([38:52](#)):

I often tell people, and I often tell faults that I'm counseling. Um, I do a lot of pastoral care and a lot of the people that come to me are coming because they have church trauma, they are losing their faith or their, um, struggling with keeping their faith and they have been hurt. Um, and one of the things I often tell people is that the church needs people much more than people need the church. Um, the church is hurting, searching, especially in the U S is, is dying for it's part of a better understanding of God. Um, and an understanding of God that is celebratory of marginalized people that is focused on, uh, lifting oppression that is, uh, deeply concerned with, um, with the poor, that is deeply concerned with how to be, how to be the body of Christ to feed the hungry, to free.

Alaina Cobb ([40:12](#)):

The prisoner is so revolutionary in our churches as to be, um, unheard of in a lot of spaces. And, you know, this is, this is the simplicity of the gospel. And that's just one of the things that frustrates me as a minister and as a trans woman, is that my existence is the heart of the gospel. Um, all of our existence is the heart of the gospel. And I should have known that, that, um, being different, being unique, being a divine image of God, however, you are growing up in a world that hates you. That's a, that's a whole piece of gospel and that should have been understood. Um, and there are some churches that understand that, that, uh, wanna, you know, paint to Rob the brush. But if we could bring that back and bring back an understanding of that, just the basic understanding of the gospel as being good news for the oppressed, what a change and what a hope. Um, and, but I, I believe that's why the us church needs to die. Um, I don't believe that we can take that in anymore on a scale that is, that is, um, recognizable a scale that will truly change, uh, quick enough, we'll die. We resurrected. Um, and in resurrecting, we will learn the gospel again. That's how this works.

Nite Hunt:

Oh, sorry. No, no, go ahead. Oh, I was just going to ask to eminent Enrique about like, how do you all see the work of like liberation and, you know, bringing back the good news that as Elena said, that was in the church, like, how do y'all see that working in, whether it be in traditional spaces or like even more liberal spaces or like with your communities, even for yourself, like, how do y'all see that? I say doing the work of like, how does it move you? I guess.

M Barclay:

I mean, I think for me, it's just, it's everything. It's like, it's, I'm learning more and more every day about how to be more fully human and, um, on learning, you know, forces. Um, I love, I find, uh, one of the things that I love about, uh, religious language is just the way that it gives us, uh, words to point to these, these things that are so shaping our individual and collective lives or the powers and principalities holidays, um, that are just deadening and destroying so much life. Um, and, uh, liberation, theologies, and, and other theologies that are offering, uh, ways, other ways of understanding what it means to be human together, what it means to be human in relationship to the land and other creatures, um, and how, how we all get more free. Uh, so that like life is more full of joy for everyone. Life is more full of beauty. Life is more full of thriving, um, for everyone like that is what God is to me. Like, um, God, is that work? God is, is that possibility. God, is that invitation. Um, and I think, um, yeah, for me, it's about like deepening into that kind of humaning. If that makes sense, yeah.

Enrique Cintron:

Something that, um, I encounter a lot. Um, my work as a spiritual director is, um, I will have folks share with me the sense of fear of kind of like living into their fullest self. Um, also being a spiritual person or having a relationship with God, there's this sense of like, I don't know, that I can fully be who I am. Um, and also like have this relationship and, you know, that's, that's a direct result of church trauma and all of these different beliefs that have, you know, allowed for that. Um, and what I have offered in turn is, you know, coming from my perspective as a Christian, like Jesus said himself, that he came so that we may have life and have it abundantly. Right. Um, and so there's no reason to fear living your fullest self and living into who God has called you to be. Um, and for me, like being able to offer that, um, you know, I hear from clients like, wow, that's like, that's, I never thought about it that way, but it's also liberatory for me to kind of remind myself that too, that like, you know, there is so much power in being able to just live your truth and to know that that truth is sacred and it's who God made you to be. Um, and I think it in turn, like calls us all into deeper solidarity with each other as well, because like, if I want to honor my own truth, I have to honor everyone else's. Um, and so for me, it's like this, this journey of living into my own truth to enable others to do the same and recognizing that our stories are all sacred and that our lives are all sacred.

M Barclay:

That's beautiful. I can see you being so good at holding that, that vital space for people. And it's so beautiful to imagine, um, the kind of, uh, just need you're meeting by, by showing up as your full self. Right.

Nite Hunt:

Beautiful. Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's kind of funny. Cause it reminds me of like the childhood church I grew up in or like at least the church I remember right. Of like always hearing you're supposed to bring your full self to church. Like the pastor used to say, I don't care if you're out on the corner last night, you always

come here this morning. You know, the idea that no matter who you were, what you're off to, like everyone was welcome. And I'm like, Alaina was saying, it's like, the church doesn't have that anymore. And like just repeating what all of you are saying, it's just like the church, you know? And it's just how, like Alaina was saying like, you know, the church needs folks because I see us, I see y'all as like bringing that energy back into the church of like, it's not just us, you need to bring back, but it's everyone you've kicked out trying to be this pillar of capitalism and like patriarchy who, but it's like, no, when you just get back to the people, you know, and that's what people want to, you know, that's, that's what I see in here. Even for cisfolks, it's like, that's what they want. And that's what trans people, you know, when they're dealing with religious trauma, want to, they're just like, I just want to be myself here. And so Enrique, like I think just saying that like reminding me, like if hearing that of like, you know, like God wants me fully and it's just, it's, you know, something I, I don't think about often enough and that's, I don't think. And just hearing you saying that I can imagine for other people you say that too, just that being powerful. So thank you for that. I really appreciate that. But with that, we are coming up on the hour and I respect y'all's time and it's been wonderful having you all here and just really getting to hear about some of the amazing ways that, that I've only ever seen in art, but, you know, seeing and hearing it and feeling it in my heart of like all the things God can be, even if we do want to fight them in a back ally. And, um, but still, you know, coming to that fight and can be all of it and I'm gonna be, um, so yeah, I, I, I thank y'all for that because it does warm me in it and it brings me to like enlightened space. I don't know if that's the word, but it does. It does soothe, it does feel soothing. So thank you all for that. And with that, I would love to have, if y'all have any closing words for the listeners, for folks tuning in, I guess the closing question would be is, you know, what would y'all say about gender and divinity, you know, for folks listening. And I was like, how can they start their journey or even continue their journey on, do you know, navigating of like God and gender, or like how to see God morphing and changing or imagining the joy in experiencing all that God has offered?

Alaina Cobb:

Like, yeah, I would say, um, I mean, if you feel like you need to fight God, fight God, um, I mean, there's, there's precedent. I mean, there's trusted providing God and then ending up having your name. Um, a lot of us, we, we ended up fighting God and learning something about ourselves. Um, and if you need to, and if you need that space to, um, to have it out, if you need that space to deal with a God whose gender you don't understand, or who has been given to you in such a way that you can understand and you feel is oppressive and you feel lording over, you know, all these things they're given to us, if you need to find it out, find it out. Um, I know that that's okay and that's, um, a part of a real and vibrant faith journey. Um, and that doesn't mean that you've given up. Um, not that it's not okay to, but it doesn't mean that you're giving up. It just means that you're being honest about where you are at, um, and being honest about where you're at is a very important part of being able to continue. And that's, that's what I was-

Nite Hunt:

Thank you. Thank you for that.

Enrique Cintron:

I think that I would remind folks that you don't have to do this alone. Um, it's so important to have fellowship and to be able to gather with people who, you know, make you feel safe. Um, but who can also like help you to challenge some of the beliefs that you've had about church and about God, um, I've been really blessed to have found like this, like growing community of and trans people from all over the country, you know, thanks to the internet. And it's just been so beautiful to get to know people and to

hear their stories and, you know, sometimes like I'll be having conversations with folks and somebody will say something about, you know, Jesus that just like really like turns my entire thinking, like upside down. Right. And, um, sometimes like initially it might kind of like make me bristle a little bit because, you know, I'm so impacting a lot of like Catholic guilt and stuff. Um, but then I sit with it and I'm like, oh yeah, like I can totally see that. And that makes a lot of sense to me. Um, so it's just so important to be able to find community and to be able to question and be in conversation with folks like that's how, you know, we all grow in our understanding of the divine and find support and nurture our beliefs in our faith.

Nite Hunt:

Yeah. Thank you for that.

M Barclay:

I, I'm thinking about, uh, Dr. Mary Hunt, she was a feminist lesbian Catholic theologian, um, who wrote, uh, about the rise of women who were ordained. And, um, she, Dr. Hunt wrote about the, the, the threat of adding women and stirring, um, as if like just putting women in the pulpit would then like, change the sexist theology, the sexist dynamics that the church would become feminist, you know, like we have seen that that is not the case that that was not, and that we did just add women and stir to most, um, institutional, um, Christian denominations. Um, and, uh, I'm thinking about a similar, like, need to stay attentive to, uh, changing God's pronouns, without changing anything else. And suggesting that, that actually contributes to gender equality, um, or to a different experience of relationship with the divine. Um, everything is everything. And so like, um, you know, I have a, a woman governor in Iowa who is like deadly and destructive, and like, it is in no way beneficial, um, to women that she is a woman and like doing the same thing with God, um, just changing the pronouns, um, and continuing to contribute to, to theological destruction is it may feel good in some ways to some people, but, um, we have to press further. We have to press deeper. We have to think, um, and open ourselves to, um, much more radical transformation than, than that. If, if love is the hope.

Alaina Cobb:

Yeah. Right. Uh, I know this is wrapping it up, but you know, that just makes me think it's not - if bombs are being dropped in your country. You don't care that we have a black woman as our vice president, um, the same way, like if your church is actively harming people, it doesn't matter how you catch the languaging. Um, yeah. Thank you M for saying that, because I think that's so important. Like, we, there are so many things that we have to deal with and we have to, um, work our way through as a church. Um, and, and this is just one very small part of that.

Nite Hunt:

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you all for that. I appreciate, I appreciate all the different takes, you know, a person just getting, just getting from this from, you know, there's still work to be done. Like it doesn't just stop. Uh, oh, you realize God has a different gender or like that, that shouldn't be your stopping point of, you know, of the work that is necessary. And that should always be done in community. Like it should be, you know, with fellowship that you believe is doing the work you want to do. Like maybe you're not doing that work right away, but, you know, doing with people who are also trying to do what you're doing, you know, so anyway, again, thank you all for coming here and thank y'all for speaking. I really appreciate it. It, it is like warming, soothing, you know, like teen, like on a cold. And I feel that I've just like, they're like, even not like I'm thinking, like I thought, you know, you know, just thinking I'm

always ready to fight God, but like actually now remembering that when I show up to the fight, I still need to be all of myself. I can't just be the theologian that I want to be. I want, I need to be everything that I am currently, but also wanting to become. So I appreciate that. I appreciate y'all. So thank you again for being here. Um, have a wonderful evening!