

THE GOOSE TALKS, PUBLIC THEOLOGY, AND GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE
MATTHEW 18:15-17 IN ACTION

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Advisor: Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

Amanda Todd
Drew University
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ABSTRACT

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MATTHEW 18:15-17 IN ACTION

Amanda Todd

Colorado Springs, Colorado

In the summer of 2020, The Wild Goose Meeting House, a café in downtown Colorado Springs, Colorado, crafted a series of conversations on racial justice called “The Goose Talks.” Over the course of twelve weeks, the café hosted sixteen events in order to engage the local community in discussions about the intersection of race and topics such as religion, reparations, inclusion, LGBTQ justice, and more.

While The Goose Talks series was successful in its own right, the events that followed created an opportunity to explore what happens when spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community-building intersect in the public square, especially in a culture where social media affects all areas of life.

This paper analyzes The Goose Talks as well as conflict within the community created with those who participated in The Goose Talks in various ways, and considers the conflict resolution prescribed by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 as an important aspect of public theology in the current day.

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, social justice, and the arts are elements that are imperative to hearing God's call to do the work to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth, an essential element in the life of a public theologian. In my work as a minister of worship and arts in both large and small churches, I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to craft and execute a number of events that engage the intersection of spirituality, social justice, and the arts within the public square:

- *Draw Near* was a worship experience/concert that focused on the liminal space of the season of Advent. Through music, poetry, and prayer, we explored the ways that Christians participate in the incarnation of Jesus every year at Christmastime, becoming the hands and feet of Jesus on earth.
- *Walk with Me: A Requiem for the Streets* was a concert memorializing those who died homeless within our city and county. Those in attendance had an opportunity to mourn the loss of people who might otherwise have been forgotten, and received a challenge to begin the hard work to reverse the marginalization and stigmatization of those who experience homelessness.
- *Away from the Manger: An Epiphany Concert of Traveling Truths* gave my congregation an opportunity to explore what happened to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph after the well-known part of the Christmas story was over, as the Holy Family fled their homeland and sought asylum from King

Herod. My congregation listened for God's call to respond to asylum seekers in the present day, and through our work on this event, were compelled to house fourteen asylum seekers within our church walls during January 2020.

Through the process of creating art for these three events, the communities I serve had experiences of theology in the public square, engaging with people directly affected by some of the most pressing social justice issues of our day, and began to listen for God's call to action in the world: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"¹

This process of creating art together in community serves as a way of learning about the divine and the world and how to take action in response to our learning. God is calling us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk with humility. Sometimes it is clear how to fully live into God's call. Other times it requires deep discernment, engagement, and introspection. The practice of creating art in a spiritual community can provide a conduit for interaction with the divine.

My particular ministerial calling over the last twenty years has been focused on the congregational setting. Because I have served individual congregations these many years, I always begin my ministry immediately immersed within an already established community. In those communities, I have attempted to engage art-making, divine communion, and social justice in all of my work. In the summer of 2020, I began a project that challenged me to create and cultivate a sense of community outside of an

¹ Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

already existing congregation, provoking me to truly embrace the concept of public theology. Through that exciting, humbling, and sometimes painful process, I have discovered a fourth intersection of my ministerial calling: community-building.

Now more than ever, I understand that the heart of my ministry lies at the intersections of spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community-building. This paper tells the story of one particular example of my intersectional ministry in action in the public square. Before I begin, it is important to define what I mean by “spirituality,” “social justice,” “the arts,” “community-building,” and “public theology.”

DEFINITIONS

DEFINING SPIRITUALITY

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines spirituality thusly: “1: something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such 2: CLERGY 3: sensitivity or attachment to religious values 4: the quality or state of being spiritual.”² This sterile, condensed definition of spirituality is not the appropriate definition for this paper.

For the purposes of this paper and my research, spirituality is anything but sterile. Theologian Alister E. McGrath’s words resonate with my definition of spirituality:

The word ‘spirituality’ draws on the Hebrew word *ruach* – a rich term usually translated as ‘spirit,’ yet which includes a range of meanings including ‘spirit,’ yet extending to ‘breath’ and wind.’ To talk about ‘the spirit’ is to discuss what gives

² “Spirituality.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed March 10, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spirituality>.

live and animation to someone. ‘Spirituality’ is thus about the life of faith – what drives and motivates it, and what people find helpful in sustaining and developing it. It is about that which animates the life of believers and urges them on to deepen and perfect what has at present only begun.³

To McGrath, spirituality is that ineffable quality that arouses a person or a community to constantly improve upon life. Walter Brueggemann, in his book *The Spirituality of the Psalms*, defines spirituality as “genuine communion with God.”⁴ Brueggemann goes on to say that “communion with God cannot be celebrated without attention to the nature of the community, both among human persons and with God.”⁵

Diana Butler Bass echoes Brueggemann, albeit more poetically:

Spirituality is about personal experience – the deep realization that dirt is good, water is holy, the sky holds wonder; that we are part of a great web of life, our home is in God, and our moral life is entwined with that of our neighbor. But none of this is for the sake of feeling good, individual prosperity, or guaranteeing a blessed afterlife. It is about tracing the threads of the interconnected universe, about finding God in nature and in community – and, in finding God, discovering that we really are one.⁶

For the purposes of my research, I define spirituality as *that which enables communion with the divine and inspires us to live the full and authentic life that God is calling each of us to live.*

³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Germany: Wiley, 2013), 1-2.

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 2001), 58.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 2001), 59.

⁶ Diana Butler Bass, *Grounded: Reconnecting the Kingdom of Heaven with Our Life on Earth* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), 238.

DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE

In an essay called “Age, Race, Class and Sex,” lesbian feminist Audre Lorde writes “somewhere on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a *mythical norm*, which each one of us within our hearts knows, ‘that’s not me.’ In america [sic], this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian [sic], and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside in this society.”⁷ This “mythical norm” leads to the oppression of anyone who does not identify with that very narrow definition. Those who answer the call to engage in the work of social justice are attempting to “reconstruct new rules that are truly equal, roles that complement each other instead of competing, assumptions that value all groups instead of ascribing value to some and devaluing others, and structures that promote cooperation and shared power instead of power over each other.”⁸ Those who work toward social justice are attempting to obliterate the mythical norm.

The “vision for social justice is a world in which the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, and all members [of society] are physically and psychologically safe and secure, recognized and treated with respect.”⁹ Because the mythical norm has been the narrative of the United States of America since its inception, social justice activism cannot strictly be rooted in the present and future of this nation. To achieve social justice, we as a society must hold ourselves accountable for the grave

⁷ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Penguin Books, 2020), 106.

⁸ Maurianne Adams, Lee Ann Bell, with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y Joshi, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3.

⁹ Maurianne Adams, Lee Ann Bell, with Diane J. Goodman and Khyati Y Joshi, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3.

injustices of the United States of America, including but certainly not limited to slavery and racism, heteronormativity and the abuse and oppression of queer people, patriarchy and misogyny, and economic injustice and the greed of capitalism. We must acknowledge that working toward true social justice means working toward dismantling the long-held systems of oppression and injustice that work against those who identify in opposition to the mythical norm.

For the purposes of this paper, social justice will be defined as *the equal access to resources, wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society and the dismantling of all institutionalized systems and ideals of oppression of those outside the “mythical norm.”*

DEFINING ART

“Art is art. Everything else is everything else.”

- Ad Reinhardt¹⁰

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “art” as “the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects.”¹¹

According to the National Endowment for the Arts

The term “the arts” includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by diverse

¹⁰ Ad Reinhardt, *Art-as-art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 51.

¹¹ “Art,” Merriam-Webster, Accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art/>

peoples of this country. [sic] and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.¹²

When I speak of “the arts” I am including all forms within the traditional fine arts as well as all forms of folk art and crafting. Within the context of spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community, I am as interested in amateur art as I am in professional art, so only a limited amount of “skill and imagination” is required. “Every person is an artist. Even if they have forgotten that childhood freedom, everyone has potential, if not always inclination, to reclaim what they once did naturally.”¹³ Especially as we talk about art within community, it is important to recognize

...multiple and different beautiful(s); the beautiful of exceptional and indisputably classic art, existing side by side with the beautiful of more modest art (what has been variously called “folk,” or “popular,” or “vernacular”). If we are outsiders, this latter beauty is activated by our awareness of “the theological dimension of art.” This is different from the formally beautiful but just as important, and it emerges from the insights of a community as they creatively interpret together their present, contrasting their past with their future.¹⁴

Therefore, for the purposes of my work “the arts” will be defined as broadly as possible:
the production of and appreciation for artifacts created by human beings.

DEFINING COMMUNITY

“Community” is a word that I use multiple times a day. Humans are communal by nature, and we find ourselves in myriad communities throughout our lives. It is, in fact,

¹² “20 U.S. Code § 952 – Definitions.” Legal Information Institute. Accessed March 15, 2020. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/952>.

¹³ Deborah Sokolove, *Sanctifying Art* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013), 87.

¹⁴ Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu, “Building the Community of Theology and the Arts: Part 1: The Borderland” Vol. 23, no. 3 *Arts, the Journal of the Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*, September 2012, 24.

“virtually impossible to completely separate oneself from some form of community and community experience.”¹⁵ However, the meaning of the word “community” is regularly left undefined. Oftentimes, community is demarcated by location. If people live near one another, they naturally create community. While this definition may be accurate in some contexts, I believe there is more to community-building than simple proximity, especially in our global world. As J.L. Miles, Sr. writes in an essay entitled “Ubuntu and Defining Community in America: A 21st Century Viewpoint,” community can be defined as “a group of people or organisms that interact with one another, therefore collectively having impact on one another’s wellbeing and function within the community.”¹⁶ Community-building will thus be defined as *the act of intentionally drawing people together (physically or virtually) in order to create a sense of interdependence.*

DEFINING PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Professor Cornel West famously said, “justice is what love looks like in public.” That may be the simplest and most concise definition of public theology there is. Martin Marty invented the term “public theology” in the 1970s as a way to talk about the work that churches and religious organizations do *outside* of their specific communities. The idea of public theology has deep roots in the Christian tradition, but the phrase itself is relatively new. According to authors Sebastian Kim and Katie Day, “Public Theology refers to the church reflectively engaging with those within and outside its institutions on

¹⁵ Miles Sr., J.L. (2017), “Ubuntu and Defining Community in America: A 21st Century Viewpoint.” *Anthropol Conscious*, 28: 178-186. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/10.1111/anoc.12079>

¹⁶ Miles Sr., J.L. (2017), “Ubuntu and Defining Community in America: A 21st Century Viewpoint.” *Anthropol Conscious*, 28: 178-186. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/10.1111/anoc.12079>

issues of common interest and for the common good.”¹⁷ Susan Codone reminds us that, as Christians, we can change the world by engaging in public theology:

If all Christians act as public theologians by sharing our stories in a collective history that improves the common good of the church and the world, we can challenge the systemic social problems of racism, sexual abuse, misogyny, and domestic violence with courage—hoping for change, not retribution. We make our public theology compelling by being willing to walk boldly into the public square and engaging society with our beliefs and experiences. Stories are useful, but using them to instigate public action over time creates change.¹⁸

In my work and research, public theology will be defined as *acting out one’s faith claims of justice and love in the public square.*

THE GOOSE TALKS – A CASE STUDY

On May 25, 2020, 46-year-old George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis, MN police officer Derek Chauvin, igniting a racial reckoning that has changed the United States forever. People across the nation were compelled to respond to this state sanctioned murder, as well as the recent murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many other Black Americans. My husband, Russ Ware, and I were no different.

We, along with our business partners Yemi and Abbey Mobolade, own two small cafés in Colorado Springs, Colorado, called The Wild Goose Meeting House (The Goose) and Good Neighbors Meeting House (Good Neighbors). The purpose of the “Meeting House” model is to be a place that draws people together, enriches relationships,

¹⁷ Sebastian Kim and Katie Day, *A Companion to Public Theology*, (Boston: Brill, 2017), 2.

¹⁸ Susan Codone, “Public Theology Isn’t Just for Academics,” *Christianity Today*, August 7, 2020, Retrieved from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/august-web-only/public-theology-isnt-just-for-academics-codone.html>

encourages justice, and speaks into and builds community. As the owners of these two establishments and as people deeply invested both in our community and in racial justice, we immediately put up “Black Lives Matter” posters in both restaurants following Floyd’s murder, *and* we knew we had to do more than simply hang signs. We wanted to engage people in Colorado Springs, an area that is considered quite conservative and evangelical, in open and honest conversations about racial justice with the hope of helping our community to understand diverse perspectives and to effect real change.

We knew that engaging the community around racial justice and police reform would be challenging, and was simultaneously imperative, so “The Goose Talks,” a series of conversations around racial justice, was born. From June 24, to September 20, 2020, The Wild Goose Meeting House hosted (and Good Neighbors Meeting House sponsored and promoted) sixteen events:

- A conversation around the intersection of Race, Religion and Sport in American culture with Dr. Jeff Scholes, local religion and philosophy professor
- An interactive discussion about the book and movie “*Just Mercy*” with local activist Rev. Roger Butts and chaplain Tracy Hilts
- An introduction to the Truth and Conciliation Project with Rev. Dr. Stephany Rose Spaulding, local pastor, professor, and public servant
- A discussion of the historical and contemporary intersections of racial and LGBTQ justice with local LGBTQ activists Candace Woods and Ash Stephens
- A conversation about raising kids to be actively anti-racist in a racially unjust America, facilitated by Mandy Todd and Jessica Gemm, both residents of Colorado Springs and parents of young children

- A public forum with The People 719, a group of young activists leading protests in Colorado Springs
- Two events with Dr. Christina Jiménez about dismantling systemic oppression in our daily lives
- A conversation challenging us to think beyond our beliefs in the context of accepting people for who they are and how they show up in society with Dr. Regina Lewis, local professor and public speaker
- *Black is Not a Bad Word*, an exploration of some of the things that well-intentioned white people say, with Amelia Kemp, a young biracial woman who grew up in conservative northern Colorado Springs
- A book event with Sarah Jackson about her recently published book *The House that Love Built*, in which she describes her experience of starting *Casa de Paz*, a nonprofit organization that houses the family of people detained in the Aurora, Colorado ICE detention center
- A film viewing of the documentary “The Push Outs” and a conversation about the school-to-prison pipeline and racial inequality, with Dr. Eddie Portillos, local professor and scholar
- *The Power of Presence*, a presentation about showing up to difficult conversations authentically, with Dr. Michael Thomas, the superintendent of Colorado Springs School District 11
- “Unreasonable” Demands: *Why We Need Radical Voices* with scholar-activists Samantha and Jon Christiansen of the Chinook Center of Colorado Springs

- An interactive discussion of next steps following a period of racial reckoning with Dr. Andrea Herrera, a diversity, equity and inclusion expert and scholar
- A book release event with MelindaJoy Mingo on her newly released book *Colors of Culture*, which critically explores inequality and the importance of diverse relationships

Because these events happened in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, we were careful to limit the number of individuals who were physically in the restaurant. We sold tickets to control in-person attendance, and all ticket proceeds were donated to local non-profits, including The People 719, Tessa, Casa de Paz, Friends of D11, the Chinook Center, and Care and Share Food Bank.

In order to extend the reach of these events, we shared each of them via Facebook Live, and the videos were (and are) available on The Wild Goose Meeting House Facebook page for viewing any time following each event.¹⁹ Almost 600 people joined the live events in-person or online, and the total combined estimated reach of our Facebook videos as of January 15, 2021 was over 41,000 people.²⁰

Throughout the summer of 2020, the progressive/liberal community of Colorado Springs expressed appreciation for these events. On July 26, 2020, at an all-staff training and celebration meeting, the staff teams of The Goose and Good Neighbors expressed how much they loved The Goose Talks and shared their gratitude to be working for businesses that didn't shy away from hard issues. On The Wild Goose Facebook page on

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/wildgoosemeetinghouse/videos>

²⁰ See the appendix for more in-depth analysis of each individual event.

July 29, 2020, Colorado Springs Rising Professionals had this to say about The Goose's commitment to creating bold space for challenging conversations:

Thank you The Wild Goose Meeting House for providing an outlet and facilitating this meeting and discussion! We appreciate that you see your purpose not just [sic] provide great food, drinks, and service, but to 'be a bridge' that allows us all to come together, have our voices heard, and accelerate the process of building strong, honest relationships across local cultures.²¹

As I wrote in the introduction, the heart of my ministry lies at the intersections of spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community-building. While I have spent the majority of my time within the congregational setting with previously established communities, I have begun to understand that community-building is an ongoing and constantly emerging process in any context. In some ways, the community of The Goose, while entirely secular, is much like the community of a local church congregation. Even before the summer of 2020, The Goose had become an important place for communal gatherings. The opportunity and challenge of hosting sixteen events in twelve weeks proved to be instrumental in continuing to create community in downtown Colorado Springs. Using our voice and platform to stand up for racial justice helped to diversify our customers. Because The Goose sits on an important corner at the north end of downtown, we began to notice a number of justice-oriented meetings happening there. The Goose also became a gathering spot for people to meet before heading over to City Hall or our local downtown park for rallies and marches, as we often supplied water bottles and granola bars for protesters and activists. In addition, we developed

²¹ Colorado Springs Rising Professionals (@CSRisingProfessionals) "Thank you The Wild Goose Meeting House for providing an outlet and facilitating this meeting and discussion!" Facebook, July 29, 2020, 8:49 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/wildgoosemeetinghouse/photos/a.1407651156118793/2582217555328808/>

partnerships with several different food and clothing pantries to collect donations for those in need. The work of The Goose Talks provided an opportunity *to intentionally draw people together (physically and virtually) in order to create a sense of interdependence with a focus on the equal access to resources, wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society and the dismantling of institutionalized systems and ideals of oppression of those outside the “mythical norm” through the production of and appreciation for artifacts created by human beings in order to live a full and authentic life by acting out one’s faith claims for justice and love in the public sphere.* This work was public theology at the intersections of spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community-building.

The Goose Talks continued through the late summer and on August 30, 2020, Samantha and Jon Christiansen of the Chinook Center were presenters for “The Goose Talks: ‘Unreasonable’ Demands.” The Chinook Center, according to their website, is “a progressive, mission driven community space that empowers and connects people and grassroots organizations working for social, economic and environmental justice in the Pikes Peak region.”²² The event focused on how those advocating “radical ideas” have been instrumental in the collective journey for social justice. Toward the end of the presentation, the idea of defunding/abolishing the police was brought up as a contemporary example of an “unreasonable” demand that could be collectively mobilized to effect change. In some closing remarks, my husband Russ mentioned that he had met with a public relations officer of the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) just two days earlier, and that we were considering an event in The Goose Talks series in

²² “The Chinook Center,” May 31, 2021, www.chinookcenter.org

which she might participate. The next day, Russ made a social media post on The Goose's Facebook and Instagram pages suggesting the same thing. There was immediate backlash on those social media posts from people who were concerned about giving the CSPD a platform. According to one Facebook comment, the Colorado Springs Police Department "is already well-represented both in local and national media."²³ A poster on Instagram had more harsh things to say: "This is truly wack that you want to offer a platform to a violent white supremacist institution. Im [sic] glad that your true neoliberal trash colors are coming out."²⁴

Since Spring of 2020, as we had been hosting The Goose Talks, this was our first experience of being "called out" on social media. While deeply uncomfortable, this feedback was instructive. Russ responded on Instagram within twenty-four hours:

Hello, all. This is Russ and I am listening. I was thinking simply in terms of promoting dialogue. But I understand the concerns. Just had a discussion with one of our managers and related to staff, we are going to hold off on this until we have had a chance to meet as a staff and make a decision together...Thanks all for speaking out, everyone, and saying the hard things. It is appreciated.²⁵

We scheduled a meeting for September 6, 2020 with our staff team to discuss the purpose and intention of The Goose Talks as well as whether or not CSPD would be invited to participate in an event at our business. At that meeting, the majority of our staff

²³ Ethan Everhart, (@ethaneverhart), "What is the thought process behind hosting CSPD? Their narrative is already well-represented both in local and national media." Facebook, August 31, 2020, 12:53 p.m., <https://www.facebook.com/wildgoosemeetinghouse/photos/a.1407651156118793/2610756032474960/>

²⁴ (@cruspid), "cspd does not have any right to be speaking on equality or equity or anything of the sort." Instagram, August 31, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEjmPM1gfcB/> (cruspid)

²⁵ Russ Ware, (@wildgoosemeetinghouse), "This is Russ and I am listening. I was thinking simply in terms of promoting dialogue." Instagram, August 31, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEjmPM1gfcB/>

expressed the opinion that hosting CSPD did not feel like an appropriate or helpful next step in the ongoing development of The Goose Talks. Ownership agreed that the concerns were valid and that we would not be moving forward with the idea of having any representative of the Colorado Springs Police Department participate in The Goose Talks. We also clarified that when we as a business speak into social matters and support causes and organizations, we are doing so on a very specific basis because we want to support that particular issue, but that we are not a political organization and no assumptions should be made in that regard. We clarified that we are not interested in aligning ourselves with any particular ideology or political side. We are simply trying to be an active voice in promoting things we believe are good and right, the main one being the sharing of ideas and honest dialogue, which is intrinsically tied to our purpose as a Meeting House. We expressed that we agree with the need for significant reform in law enforcement, but that we did not believe that “all cops are bastards,”²⁶ and that we would continue to serve all people at our places. There were moments during this meeting that were challenging and tense, but overall, it was a productive meeting, and I felt good about the ways we had, in the true “Meeting House” model, come together to discuss hard things. I felt confident that we could and would craft a way forward that was respectful of all involved.

Over the course of the next few weeks, we worked to engage our staff team in what the future of The Goose Talks might be. I met with several staffers who had ideas about guests and topics we might feature. I felt very positive about all that had transpired

²⁶ Colin Groundwater, “A Brief History of ACAB,” *GQ*. June 10, 2020, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.gq.com/story/history-of-acab>

with regards to the future of The Goose Talks with a more well-defined and collaboratively identified purpose. I was sure that we would be able to step with confidence and cooperation into the next phase of presenters and guests as we moved into the winter, and especially into the presidential election of 2020.

Surprisingly, on Monday, October 5, 2020, a group of staff presented a list of concerns around wages, tip sharing, and Human Resources policies at our businesses. Most of those concerns had never before been brought to our attention. In addition to the presentation of the list of concerns, those members of the staff planned a meeting for the following morning that would necessitate a closure of the businesses with very little notice, without discussing that decision with ownership or upper management, and demanded that Russ and Yemi be present. Russ responded immediately to the staff about ownership's intent to address all the concerns, and expressed regret that the businesses would not close, nor could the owners attend the meeting the next morning, due to the complications of closing both businesses with less than 24-hours' notice. However, Russ reserved the semi-private meeting space at The Goose for those people who chose to meet and covered the shifts of those employees who were scheduled to work that morning but intended to attend that meeting instead. Additionally, a meeting to discuss the issues more fully was set for the following Sunday, and it was made clear that anyone could request a meeting with ownership at any point before then to get the conversations started. Simultaneously, we began researching best practices about how to respond to the complaints and, in the midst of a global pandemic that has significantly and permanently affected our industry, how we might be able to creatively and sustainably adjust our pay scale and business model to better address the needs of our employees.

Within two days of sharing the complaints with the ownership, a protest was formed outside of The Wild Goose. It was heart wrenching to see that many of the people protesting outside of our restaurant were the same people who had been participating in The Goose Talks in the previous weeks. Over the course of the next few days, that group of staff, as well as other community organizers and activists, began a social media campaign focused on attacking both the businesses and the owners of the businesses personally, with special attention on targeting Russ with comments such as “Russ preaching BLM and make [sic] cozy concessions to police in the same breath is pure social justice vogue bullshit. Keep that pressure up tho yinz [sic] are doing good shit,”²⁷ and “Russ hides behind the guise of religion and progressive politics but in reality he does not care about the community or his workers.”²⁸

During the course of the turmoil and fallout with staff, ownership, and the community, one of the most challenging things was the way that many people took sides almost immediately. A ministry colleague and friend of mine, Mallory, posted her public support of the workers on Facebook on October 10, 2020, stating that the staff had “been harmed and honestly, have followed conflict resolution as laid out in Matthew 18 beautifully.”²⁹ I immediately bristled at the reference to this scripture text, as it is one

²⁷ (@jonasgoonface), “Russ preaching BLM and make cozy concessions to police in the same breath is pure social justice vogue bullshit. Keep that pressure up tho yinz are doing good shit” Instagram, November 28, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIJMmuVFN7j/>

²⁸ Isaiah Partridgechase, (@wildneighborsworkers), “Hi my name is Isaiah I am a back of house worker at Good Neighbors Meeting House and I was fired today. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CII02h3FkJ0/>

²⁹ Mallory Everhart, (@M.p.everhart), “I donated to support the workers at Wild Goose and Good Neighbors and here’s why: standing with workers is a faith commitment.” October 10, 2020, 11:53 a.m., <https://www.facebook.com/M.p.everhart>

with which I am very familiar, having used it as guidance for resolving conflict in a number of church related situations. Matthew 18:15-17 is as follows:

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.
(NRSV)

While the workers do not claim any religious affiliation, Mallory is a person of faith, and thus centered her post in the biblical context. Her post forced me to examine this unfolding secular situation through a theological lens. I again call on theologian Walter Brueggeman who writes that “communion with God cannot be celebrated without attention to the nature of the community, both among human persons and with God.”³⁰

In *Rules for Radicals*, author Saul Alinsky says, “Conflict is the essential core of a free and open society. If one were to project the democratic way of life in the form of a musical score, its major theme would be the harmony of dissonance.”³¹ It is true that conflict is common in human interactions, and especially in the work for justice. Communion with God, in communion with humanity, is never devoid of struggle. In fact, Jesus made it clear in Matthew 18:15-17 that conflict and dissonance would occur within communities.

³⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 2001), 59.

³¹ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971), 62.

This excerpt from the Gospel of Matthew is unique in that it is the only passage of biblical text that gives a step-by-step formula for conflict resolution. Of course, there are many passages in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament that offer prescriptions for a believer's behavior with regards to human interactions and relationships, but this Matthew text actually outlines a process for returning to right relationship that has no biblical parallel. This passage begins with a relationship between two members of the church or community, and Jesus recommends that when there is a conflict (one person's 'sin' against another) the first step is a one-on-one conversation. It is interesting to note that while the NRSV translation uses the more inclusive language of "member of the church," the literal translation of the Greek "adelphos" used in this text is "brother." This directive for conflict resolution affirms an intimate relationship between the parties. If that personal, intimate interaction is unsuccessful, the next step is to involve one or two others within the community as witnesses. Note here that the others are brought in to *witness*, not to testify against the offender. This move towards a more communal process still exhibits an understanding of the importance of relationship and community between the two individuals.

If resolution still does not come, the next step is to involve the entire church in the conflict resolution and finally, "if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector." This short passage expresses the importance of relationship and community. Jesus wants his followers to be in right relationship with one another, not just because that is what is best for the individual. It is always what is best for the community.

As we compare the steps taken by the workers who approached the ownership with their complaints to the steps laid out by Jesus in this passage, it is clear that there are several steps missing. Many of the complaints that the staff addressed on October 5 were issues that had never been raised previously. They approached their “transgressor” not one-on-one, but as an assembly as the first step. Nonetheless, we responded to the staff team in less than 24 hours after the list of complaints was delivered, with a plan for a full staff meeting the following Sunday, saying that ownership is “100% committed to improvement in every single way, with a top priority being a staff team that is celebrated and supported.” According to Matthew 18:15, “if the member listens to you, you have regained that one.” While there may have been some negotiating to be done, our response seems to imply that conflict resolution was imminent. However, the “assembly” of workers felt compelled to move forward with further steps, planning a protest outside The Wild Goose Meeting House on October 7, a sit-in a few days later, and a social media assault of the businesses throughout October and into November and December 2020.

The second half of verse 17 is particularly interesting in the context of what transpired with staff and ownership at The Wild Goose and Good Neighbors Meeting Houses. A simple reading of the statement “if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” might imply that the offender should be excommunicated from the assembly. In fact, this scripture passage is often the primary defense of excommunication from communities of faith. However, a closer look at how Jesus asks us to treat “Gentiles” and “tax collectors” is in order. Examples abound of Jesus’ relationship to Gentiles and tax collectors in the New

Testament. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus heals the Canaanite woman's daughter.³² In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus eats with tax collectors.³³ In Luke's Gospel, Jesus heals the Centurion's servant.³⁴ If Jesus continued to engage with Gentiles and tax collectors throughout his ministry, what does that mean about this final step in Jesus' instruction on how to resolve conflict with our fellow community members? It seems to me that Jesus requires us to maintain a level of continued involvement with those with whom we have conflict. Excommunication, shunning, and the more contemporary "canceling" don't fall in line with Jesus' advice in the Gospel of Matthew.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

I hosted a conversation on January 28, 2021 with some local activists, former employees, and people of faith to discuss the conflict that erupted with the owners and workers of The Wild Goose Meeting House and Good Neighbors Meeting House. The guests in that conversation were Rev. Dr. Stephany Rose Spaulding, a local activist, pastor, professor and public servant who was a speaker at a Goose Talks event; Mike Martin, the Executive Director of a national non-profit organization that focuses on non-violence and conflict resolution who had attended several Goose Talks; Adison Peti, a local activist, former employee at the Wild Goose and attendee of several Goose Talks events; Dawn Khederian, mother of a former staffer at Good Neighbors who was very vocal on social media of her support of the workers' complaints; and Candace Woods, a

³² Matt 15:21-28 (NRSV)

³³ Matt 9:10-17 (NRSV), Mark 2:15-22 (NRSV), Luke 5:29-39 (NRSV)

³⁴ Luke 7:1-10 (NRSV)

local activist, faith leader, and presenter at a Goose Talks event. In that conversation, Candace suggested that it is because of the closeness of the community that the workers and outside labor organizers chose to approach The Wild Goose and Good Neighbors with typical workplace issues. The workers and others saw the businesses' commitment to racial justice and hoped that there would be a similar obligation to support the workers' claims.

In *Rules for Radicals*, Saul Alinsky outlined twelve rules for organizing that include targeting specific individuals, personalizing attacks on them, and polarizing public opinion.³⁵ Through a process called "power-mapping" organizers are encouraged to find a target who holds power but who is also movable.³⁶ In this way, it can be argued that the staff members saw our businesses as a moveable source of power. If we stood up for racial justice, might we also be convinced (through personalized attacks and the persuasion of public opinion) to take on the rights of workers? While this may be a strategy regularly used by organizers, there are many inherent issues with this method. As Rev. Dr. Spaulding said in that meeting, the movement for racial justice is often usurped by those who seek economic justice. Furthermore, if organizers only attack those who are closest to them, it allows the institutions that hold the vast majority of the power to continue to oppress the masses.³⁷

³⁵ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971), 131-133.

³⁶ Union of Concerned Scientists, "Power Mapping Your Way to Success," last modified April 2018, accessed June 10, 2021, https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2018/07/SN_Toolkit_Power_Mapping_Your_Way_to_Success.pdf.

³⁷ Stephany Rose Spaulding, interview by author, Zoom, January 28, 2021.

Dr. Loretta Ross, visiting professor at Smith College and Black feminist/activist, has been doing research on “calling out” and “calling in” for some time, focusing extensively on the toxicity of the phenomenon of the call out. Calling out is “the act of publicly shaming another person for behavior deemed unacceptable. Calling out may be described as a sister to dragging, cousin to problematic, and one of the many things that can add up to cancellation.”³⁸ According to Meredith Clark, a professor at the University of Virginia’s department of media studies, canceling “is an act of withdrawing from someone whose expression — whether political, artistic or otherwise — was once welcome or at least tolerated, but no longer is.”³⁹ Throughout the conflict of the workers complaints, The Wild Goose Meeting House, Good Neighbors Meeting House, the owners personally, and many who supported the businesses and owners were called out and effectively canceled as the workers attempted to remove those voices from the progressive community of Colorado Springs.

While the call out has deep roots in Black and queer cultures, it has been appropriated by a depth and breadth of social media users. In a June 2020 article entitled “History Repeated As Farce – White Anarchists Must Not Co-Opt The Movement For Black Justice” author Carl Raschke paints the picture of young people protesting George Floyd’s murder with signs that read “We want justice, we want anarchy.” Yet Raschke claims that “anarchy has never been the logo for black liberation. But it has been a useful tool for youthful protégés of the white neoliberal ruling class who have historically

³⁸ Jessica Bennett, "What if Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In?," *The New York Times*, November 19, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html>

³⁹ Jonah Engel Bromwich, "Everyone is Canceled," *The New York Times*, June 28, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/style/is-it-canceled.html>

piggybacked on multi-racial activism responding to black oppression to discredit their elders, or their working-class predecessors, with the aim of fostering a new ‘vanguard politics’ with more comprehensive and class-focused goals.’⁴⁰ Rev. Dr. Spaulding shared the same concern about the workers’ complaints of The Wild Goose Meeting House and Good Neighbors Meeting House. According to Spaulding, it is “wildly problematic” when issues of class usurp issues of race as she believes happened in this situation as outside agitators sought to appropriate the racial justice work at The Goose and Good Neighbors to shift the focus of progress and protest to class issues of primarily white workers.⁴¹

Natalie Wynn, a popular transgender YouTuber, posted a video about canceling on her channel, ContraPoints, on January 2, 2020 that quickly went viral. In the video, she outlined the six “cancel culture tropes”⁴² that define toxic canceling, which include presumption of guilt (without regard for facts or nuance); abstraction (replacing the specific details of a situation with generalizations); essentialism (when criticism claims that a person is “bad” or “evil” as opposed to simply exhibiting bad behavior); pseudo-moralism or pseudo-intellectualism (claiming the moral high ground); no forgiveness (no apology is good enough); and, the transitive property of cancellation (guilt by association.) These characteristics laid out by Wynn, who as a YouTuber with over a

⁴⁰ Carl Raschke, “History Repeated As Farce – White Anarchists Must Not Co-Opt The Movement For Black Justice,” *The New Polis*, June 2, 2020. Retrieved from <https://thenewpolis.com/2020/06/02/history-repeated-as-farce-white-anarchists-must-not-co-opt-the-movement-for-black-justice-carl-raschke/>

⁴¹ Stephany Rose Spaulding, interview by author, Zoom, January 28, 2021.

⁴² Natalie Wynn, “Canceling” last modified January 2, 2020, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjMPJvMxV8>

million subscribers has been canceled a number of times, are helpful in understanding the difference between healthy call outs meant to encourage accountability and sincere repentance, and toxic cancel culture meant to destroy a person/organization/institution's reputation. These six tropes are apparent in the workers' social media attacks of The Wild Goose Meeting House and Good Neighbors Meeting House. The staff members created an Instagram page that has numerous examples of the six tropes that are destructive, untruthful, and unethical. Examples from the page include a claim that "Front of House and Back of House are paid \$9-9.10. Managers make \$11.85"⁴³ neglecting to acknowledge that those numbers don't include tips (presumption of guilt); a generalized post stating that "baristas and bartenders are worth more than minimum wage,"⁴⁴ implying that all employees at The Goose and Good Neighbors made no more than minimum wage which is untrue and overly simplified (abstraction); a post asserting that "Good Neighbors is a disgusting business,"⁴⁵ criticizing not simply the behavior, but the very nature of the business, and by association, it's owners (essentialism), and in the same post a screenshot of a comment that says, "I see through it. As long as these band aid fixes and cute graphics continue, masking your responsibility to the people you have harmed in your business practices, you are not 'doing good'"⁴⁶ (no forgiveness); a post

⁴³ (@wildneighborsworkers), "Front of House and Back of House are paid \$9-9.10. Managers make \$11.85. This is Wage Theft!" October 20, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGIKQCDFKyo/>

⁴⁴ (@wildneighborsworkers), October 6, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CGBV_rChzLQ/

⁴⁵ (@wildneighborsworkers), "The Wild Neighbors Workers Association is happy that Russ Ware is finally making some concrete changes from our list of grievances." December 22, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJG82OBlqT1/>

⁴⁶ (@wildneighborsworkers), "The Wild Neighbors Workers Association is happy that Russ Ware is finally making some concrete changes from our list of grievances." December 22, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJG82OBlqT1/>

challenging the owners' morality, stating that "we just find it morally wrong to preach love and respect for our community without recognizing how much help we as staff needed"⁴⁷ (pseudo-moralism); and a share of a video posted by The Chinook Center that admonishes Rev. Dr. Stephany Rose Spaulding for her support of The Wild Goose and Good Neighbors Meeting Houses⁴⁸ (guilt by association).

Author Sarah Schulman writes in *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* that

False accusations of harm are used to avoid acknowledgment of complicity in creating conflict and instead escalate normative conflict to the level of crisis. This choice to punish rather than resolve is a product of distorted thinking, and relies on reinforcement of negative group relationships, when instead these ideologies should be actively challenged. Through this overstatement of harm, false accusations are used to justify cruelty, while shunning keeps information from entering into the process. Resistance to shunning, exclusion, and unilateral control, while necessary, are mischaracterized as harm and used to re-justify more escalation towards bullying, state intervention, and violence. Emphasizing communication and repair, instead of shunning and separation, is the key to transforming these paradigms.⁴⁹

Through the false accusations made on Instagram, the workers were able to polarize public opinion as Alinsky recommends. These false accusations, personal attacks, and polarization made conflict resolution all but impossible.

⁴⁷ (@wildneighborsworkers), "Message them at @wildgoosemeetinghouse and @goodneighborsmeetinghouse," October 8, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGGUdA1BboW/>

⁴⁸ @chinookcenter) "Although we understand this discussion is not about us but the workers involved we want to share factual information about their campaign and our involvement." October 8, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/chinookcenter/videos/682657192625943>

⁴⁹ Sarah Schulman, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 28.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As a faith leader, I am interested in what Matthew 18:15-17 actually calls us to do. As Claudio Carvalhaes says, “There is no division between what happens inside of our liturgical occasions and our mission in the world. What we pray/believe/act shapes the world. It is as if outside we live what we practice inside. Our actions change our worship, our beliefs change our prayer, our prayer changes our actions, and so it continues.”⁵⁰ A close look at this scripture confirms that conflict is both inevitable and complicated. Jesus prescribes a method for conflict resolution that more closely aligns with calling in, rather than with calling out, canceling, or excommunicating. Calling in is, according to Dr. Ross, “a call out done with love,”⁵¹ in private, and with respect. Jesus compels us to continue to be in right relationship with one another, even through the hardest parts of human interaction. Eugene Peterson translates verse 17 quite effectively: “If he won’t listen to the church, you’ll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God’s forgiving love.”⁵² For those of us who consider ourselves Christian, calling out, canceling, and the like are the antithesis of Jesus’ prescriptive instructions for dealing with conflict within our communities. Jesus is calling us to, in the words of Schulman, resolve conflict through “communication and repair, instead of shunning and separation.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Cláudio Carvalhaes, “Communitas: Liturgy and Identity.” *International Review of Mission* 100 no. 1 (April 2011):38, doi:10.1111/j.1758-6631.2011.00055.x.

⁵¹ Jessica Bennett, “What if Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In?,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html>

⁵² Matt 18:17 (The Message)

Our hope is that the Meeting House model creates a space for repentance and love. On January 1, 2021, less than three months after the complaints were first brought to ownership, our businesses shifted our pay model away from the traditional tip-sharing model. By raising our menu prices by 15%, we were able to increase the starting wage at both businesses to \$16.25/hour, and as of May 31, 2021, the majority of our employees are making \$16.50/hour or more. This change is due in part to the complaints our staff made in October 2020. We are proud of the changes we have made to our model because we are more and more aware of the racist and biased implications of the historical tipping model.⁵⁴ Would we have made this shift away from the tipping model as quickly had we not faced the criticism of our staff members? We don't know for sure, but probably not. The events of 2020 changed us and who we are as business owners and community members. This experience forced us to consider who we are as public theologians, as our faith claims were challenged multiple times every day for months. What we learned is that when we engage in public theology, *acting out one's faith claims for justice and love in the public square*, it changes us and those around us, hopefully making us kinder, stronger, and braver.

In late February 2021, the Colorado Department of Labor announced its decision on a list of complaints that a former Wild Goose staff member submitted. Of five complaints, the Department of Labor dismissed four of them. The other complaint, that the tip-sharing model was not in compliance with labor laws, was upheld. Because we

⁵³ Sarah Schulman, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 28.

⁵⁴ Rund Abdelfatah, Ramtin Arablouei and Nina Martyris, "The Land of the Fee," *National Public Radio*, March 25, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/22/980047710/the-land-of-the-fee>

had already shifted to a no-tipping model, no changes were needed at our businesses. However, the businesses are required to pay back wages for some employees. We are currently in the process of awarding back-pay to those employees. As we wrote in a February 25, 2021 response to an article on the decision by the Department of Labor, “While we are disappointed in that ruling, we are excited about the changes we have already made, especially our removal of the tipping model in favor of straightforward pricing and unwavering pay well above minimum wage. We believe this is the way of the future for our industry, and as hard as the last few months have been, we are grateful for the prompt to make this change now.”⁵⁵

This conflict has created a significant break in our community, but we are committed to building back stronger than ever before. As an ownership team, we are encouraged by the love and support we have received from our patrons as we moved to the no-tipping model. We are in near constant conversation about how we can reclaim our justice-seeking voice in the community as public theologians, and how we can continue to create space for hard conversations as we work at the intersection of **theology**, spirituality, social justice, the arts, and community-building in the public square. The guidance of Jesus in Matthew 18 remains at the forefront of our hearts and minds. While we cannot control the actions of others, we are constantly committed to “start over from scratch...and offer again God’s forgiving love.”

⁵⁵ Heidi Beedle, “UPDATE: Colorado Department of Labor rules against the Wild Goose,” *The Colorado Springs Independent*, February 25, 2021, Updated March 2, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.csindy.com/news/update-colorado-department-of-labor-rules-against-the-wild-goose/article_a10d1a74-77cc-11eb-b762-9760a8ac308d.html

APPENDIX

Name of Event	Speaker(s)	Date & Time	# of live participants	# of digital participants	# of "people reached"
Talks in the Nest: Dr. Jeff Scholes - Race, Religion and Sport	Scholes, Jeff	6/24/20, 12pm	10	10-15	1845
Talks in the Nest: Just Mercy with Roger Butts and Tracy Hilts	Butts, Roger & Hilts, Tracey	6/26/20, 6pm	8	10-15	1487
The Goose Talks: Stephany Rose Spauling - Truth and Conciliation Project	Spaulding, Stephany Rose	6/28/20, 7:30pm	40	50-60	5887
Racial & LGBTQ+Justice	Woods, Candace & Stephens, Ash	7/7/20, 10am	7	15-20	2521
Raising Antiracist Kids with Mandy Todd and Jessica Gemm	Todd, Mandy & Gemm, Jessica	7/8/20, 5pm	7	15-20	1742
The Goose Talks: The People 719 Public Forum	Baker, Justin, Johnson, Robbie, Turman, Talon, & Mobolade, Yemi	7/12/20, 7:30pm	50	15-20	3834
The Goose Talks: Getting Uncomfortable	Jiménez, Christina	7/19/20, 7:30pm	40	15-18	2118
Talks in the Nest: Dismantling Beliefs	Lewis, Regina	7/22/20, 10am	9	8-18	2243
Talks in the Nest: Getting More Uncomfortable	Jiménez, Christina	7/24/20, 10am	5	5-12	806
Talks in the Nest: Black is Not a Bad Word	Kemp, Amelia	7/28/20, 12pm	10	8-14	1695
The Goose Talks: The House That Love Built with Sarah Jackson	Jackson, Sarah	8/5/20, 7:30pm	29	6-19	2997
Talks in the Nest: School-to-Prison Pipeline and Racial Inequality with Eddie Portillos	Portillos, Eddie	8/5/20, 5pm	9	4-11	1034
The Goose Talks: The Power of Presence with Dr. Michael Thomas	Thomas, Michael	8/23/20, 7:30pm	48	18-39	7698
The Goose Talks: Unreasonable" Demands: Why We Need Radical Voices	Christiansen, Samantha & Jon	8/30/20, 7:30pm	38	6-17	2273
The Goose Talks: Where Do We Go From Here?	Hererra, Andrea	9/13/20, 7:30pm	22	2-12	1150
The Goose Talks: Colors of Culture with MJ Mingo	Mingo, MJ	9/20/20, 7:30pm	35	2-14	1969
TOTALS			367	324	41,299

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VITA

Full name: Amanda Sue Todd

Place and date of birth: Junction City, Kansas, 3/11/1983

Parents Name: Jim and Sue Todd

Educational Institutions:

School	Place	Degree	Date
<hr/>			
Secondary: St. Xavier High School	Junction City, Kansas	High School Diploma	May 2001
Collegiate: Bethany College	Lindsborg, Kansas	Bachelor of Arts	May 2005
Graduate: Iliff School of Theology	Denver, Colorado	Master of Theological Studies	June 2013
Drew University	Madison, New Jersey	Doctor of Ministry in Public Theology	August 2021