



Podcast 16: Naming the Grace: faith learning in church communities

Simon Sutcliffe, Clare Watkins and Emma Pavey

Initial transcript by Otter.

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Emma Pavey 00:01

Hello and welcome to this podcast from the Susanna Wesley Foundation, the latest in our series on crafting hope. My name is Emma Pavey, and today I'm joined by Clare Watkins and Simon Sutcliffe for a conversation. And this is the first podcast where we're chatting in person rather than over the internet. So if you hear noises in the background, that's why. And I'll start by asking them to introduce themselves. So Simon, do you want to go first?

Simon Sutcliffe 00:25

Yeah, I'm Simon Sutcliffe. I'm a Methodist minister, but I've not got my own congregation or church that I look after at the moment. For the last about 10 years, I've been working in adult theological education, and I'm currently a Learning and Development Officer in the Learning Network at the Methodist Church.

Clare Watkins 00:42

And I'm Clare Watkins and I'm a Reader in Ecclesiology and Practical Theology here at the University of Roehampton where we're having this conversation. And I've run a couple of projects now, theological action research projects, looking at patterns of learning and faith learning among, particularly among lay people and at the moment looking at learning in the margins of church and society as well.

Emma Pavey 01:04

Great. So I think there's a lot of ways into this conversation and I'm interested in what you have to ask each other in terms of the distinctives and the overlap of what you do, and what you study: the what, the how, the why. I wondered if we could start with, with the what, so, what is the scope of the sort of learning that you're looking at in your, in your work?

Clare Watkins 01:22

That's changed, I think, over time, and I think like all good kind of research stuff, as you, the more you find out, the more you kind of start changing your ideas about this. But I think most distinctive for me at the moment is a move away from



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an account of learning which is basically education. So away from kind of liberal educational models, away from church courses, or away from catechesis too but thinking much more about the ordinary processes by which people learn faith and learn the living faith. So for example, before these research projects, I think I've always been interested in the way in which that the home, the domestic church, as we call it in my Catholic tradition, is the place of formation, that actually anything else you do with courses, teaching, theology degrees, whatever it is, is never really going to have the same effective power, as whatever it is that's gone on the home, for good and bad, of course. So I'm very interested in the ways in which people are shaped through the ordinary patterns of life. And then after that, to think about how any more formal or intentional patterns of learning or education, need to perhaps complement, perhaps stir up something in that life, but they're only ever for me a kind of tiny bit of what we're talking about when we're talking about faith learning and faith education.

Simon Sutcliffe 02:35

So for me, I'm interested, currently interested, in what theological learning looks like in what could probably best be described as non-formal learning environments. So that's not quite as informal as the learning environments that Clare has mentioned there. But nor is it a formal environment, like a university or school or a college. So it's best, I think it's best described as it's still facilitated learning for the, for the participants, for those that are all part of it. There is somebody who does the facilitating but there's not a set outcome, you don't pass an exam. There's nothing that like that about it. I'm interested in that because I used to work in a formal educational institution that did have set outcomes, in fact, doubly set. So we trained Methodist ministers, deacons, and presbyters and Anglican priests, so not only do you work to the standards of the university, but you also work to the standards of the churches. And then I've moved out of that into working with lay people, primarily lay people, in the Methodist Church who have not had any access to that kind of learning in the, in the church. So my research at the moment is exploring the appropriate pedagogies, and particularly, I've been struck by how my commitment to environmental justice informs my own pedagogical approach. And that's kind of where I'm researching at the moment.



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Clare Watkins 04:01

And I think that for me, that's an interesting thing, because it you know, you made reference to your own kind of background in formal theological education around ministry, and that it just reminded me and encouraged me to reflect on my own kind of journey there because, you know, I've worked as you know, in Cambridge Theological Federation, ecumenically preparing people for, for official ordained, usually ordained ministry, and then I worked in a Catholic seminary, worked as a member of staff with our seminarians, who were discerning rather than training, in theory, their way into ordained ministry in the Catholic Church, which is a period of, over a period of six years, so, you know, really substantial, a quite different model. But I think, having moved away from that, what, what began to worry me about those was a kind of what Robert Farley would call the kind of clerical paradigm there, that there are all sorts of assumptions. There is an attention, of course, to informal learning within those places. But that there was something about the way in which, inevitably, ministerial theological education privileges a certain kind of, a, instrumentalisation of theological education. But also, it seems to me to be almost inevitably producing an elite, unconsciously sometimes, sometimes not so unconsciously: we're the people who know, we're the people who can preach, we're the people who can teach.

So some of the work we did, that will be published so I can sort of name it with Queens and the Methodist learning project, we talked to alumni. And one of the questions was, how does the experience of theological education in this institution then affect how you understand your role as an educator. There were a number of them, I've said majority, who had, for me an extraordinary sort of sense of, you know, 'Well this is what, this is what people should be learning. And I do not understand why lay people aren't interested in decolonizing their faith'. Well I can tell you why. It's because it's really not part of most of their lives and there all sorts of things that are much more pressing on their consciousness. So there was, there was a real mismatch, I think, between the kind of education with formative or faith learning dynamics within the community, and the gap between that and actually the kinds of quite proper, and I'm not, you know, I think those things need to be taught in seminaries and theological colleges. But there is a huge gap, I think, between understanding what that education is for and what it is on the ground.



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Simon Sutcliffe 06:22

That's right, No, I agree. And I think it's interesting you talk about that kind of almost Christian elite, kind of theological, because it was a, I think I probably meant this, almost tongue in cheek. But I was always conscious that when I was teaching in a theological college, I was teaching in a kind of selected education system, I was, you know, and I, and that's not my background, that's not what I would be doing anywhere else. And that was some, that went some way for me to say, actually, I'd love to see what happens when you roll this out in, in, for other people who aren't being trained for anything. And that got me thinking, again, just about education in general. And particularly, I guess, in the global north, where people learn to do a thing. And they don't learn for the love of learning, or for being, just to be curious. I saw that in my own children's kind of education that at their worst I would say they went to exam factories, at their best they went to somewhere that might instil something to want to learn. One of the great joys of the work I do now compared to the work that I used to do is that I genuinely know that everybody who turns up in the room wants to be there. And they want to learn and they're curious. And that does change the dynamic of the way in which the sessions go, yeah.

Clare Watkins 06:22

Once I was working with a seminary colleague, and we opened up some courses for lay people, a very avant garde thing to do. He was a priest, he is a priest. This colleague's observation was that when you're working with these lay people, they've done their process, that we don't need to do the work of trying to make connections with them, because they're here. They know why they need to know about church history or about sacramental theology. And you don't have to do it in the same way as you did with often quite naively formed, I think, seminarians who can be a bit sort of pious and religious in a way that ordinary Christians, frankly, aren't, which is refreshing.

Simon Sutcliffe 08:10

Yeah, I think, and this is interesting conversation around what do we think theological education is for? You know, why, why do we think that people should have it or go through it or be with it? And somehow that answer is almost, it seems easy if they're training to be in the ministry. The church knows why they want to do that. It becomes more difficult when we were just asking about everyday



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church folk who might have some role in the church or none at all, depending on where they're at and I think one of the things that often comes out of the role of, of working with lay adults who haven't been exposed to any kind of academic theological work, is that there's a, there's a grittiness to their reflection in a way that doesn't, because they're not looking for the proper answer.

Clare Watkins 08:54

Or approval.

Simon Sutcliffe 08:55

Or approval, that's right. Yeah.

Clare Watkins 08:57

They don't feel like they're being, you know, it doesn't matter whether you agree with what they're saying or not.

Simon Sutcliffe 09:00

That's exactly, yeah. And I think, and so, and there's a freshness about that. And there's so many I mean, I'm not going to inundate you with anecdotes, but there's so many stories of stuff that they mentioned. I'll give you an anecdote, even know I said, I promise I wouldn't. We were doing some work on the temptations of Jesus, we were having a think about the temptations of Jesus. And we had lots of different ways into and I bring in various voices from the Christian tradition that had explored the temptations of Jesus. And of course, one of the temptations is turn these stones into bread. And about about five weeks later, we're in another session, and we're looking at Jesus feeding the five thousand and one of the people in the course said, 'Didn't we say in the temptations? Do you reckon Jesus, as soon as I finished that, he said, "Oh damn, I promised not to do this"'. And I thought I've, never occurred to me. Yeah. And it just never occurred to me at all. And so, so all good teachers, aren't they, and facilitators of learning are learners themselves, but I seem to get a lot more back when I'm dealing with lay adults than I did when I was at in the theological colleges, because they're not looking for right answers, or, as you say, approval.

Emma Pavey 10:05

Or they haven't been told what the answers are supposed to be.



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Simon Sutcliffe 10:08

Yeah, that's right.

Clare Watkins 10:10

The purpose question is an interesting one, because I was reading something you'd written and you, I think you, you're engaging with Jane Leach and Anthony Reddie. And I think Jane Leach is talking about education towards kind of holiness, a kind of Western tradition. And Anthony Reddie of course talks about transformation of life and society, a kind of liberationist perspective. And I was interested, and I may just have missed it, but I wasn't, it seemed to me that you were, you did I think explicitly say that you're not educating for holiness, you know, and I said well why not? Isn't, isn't that a thing? But I wasn't clear what in the end you, do you have a sense of what the purpose is for these sorts of non-formal lay education?

Simon Sutcliffe 10:47

Part of my reason for that is partly the work of the, the part of the organisation I work for in the Learning Network where if you read all of our stuff, then it's about equipping and resourcing leaders in the church.

Clare Watkins 10:59

Yeah I know!

Simon Sutcliffe 11:00

And none of it says that I'm equipping people for holiness, and that that's part of, that's part of my role. So some of that was about setting it in the context of my current ministry as an education minister. That's, so I guess another question is around the relationship between formation and whatever we mean by formation, and, and holiness. And those two kinds of questions. One of the things I don't think I've particularly written with this, but certainly within my Methodist tradition, formation is used about people in theological colleges. And discipleship is used about people in the church. And, and it raises questions for me around, you know, if, if we think formation is good, and it's good enough for those who are going to be ordained? Surely it's good enough for folk in our churches? And how do we what do we mean by formation? And what does it look like? So I remember, at nearly every staff meeting, when I was working in a college, it would be questioned, and



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when we would be asking that question, how do we know what good formation is? What does it mean? How do you assess it? And what does it look like? You know, somebody might pass all their essays and get really good marks. But are they, is there, is something else happening? I know that we think they might make good ministers in the church. And we had all sorts of conversations about how about how we might judge that, for those of us that were ordained, sometimes we might ask ourselves, 'Could I have this person as a colleague in my circuit?' I remember one person saying, "Do I want this person holding my hand when I'm dying? And, you know, that's, but those aren't academic, do you know, that's not, you don't have to pass anything to be that kind of person. And I guess, you know, that relationship between formation and education, I guess, I've never really answered it, I don't think, fully.

Clare Watkins 12:44

Because it always feels to me as a, as outside of that tradition, and I've read a lot around the kind of 'Fruitful Fields' and the discipleship stuff. But that language of equipping and training, it's the wrong way around, do you know? If you're going to talk about equipping and training, do that with your ministers. The formation that lay people often have already had and are having will often make that old lady, I always talk about old ladies, I don't know why maybe it's because I'm turning into one one, or that young man in church is exactly the person you'd want to be holding your hand, and they have possibly no formal or even informal theological education. So there's a sort of odd, there's been I think, a drive I think, in relation to institutional decline in the churches possibly in the whole language and lack of concept of discipleship in my view, which has, has tended to instrumentalise lay education, according to a clergy agenda, you know, 'we are equipping people with training and we're giving them tools' and I'm like for what? You know, they are, they are people in the world trying to live lives close to Jesus, and to, to share that in a normal, natural way. That's what most lay people, me, are called to be in the world, not, not some other thing, or some agency of the institutional church that then needs to be equipped for a task that somebody has already decided for us. So yeah, I wonder if that's all a bit about faith.

Simon Sutcliffe 14:00

Yeah, so I suppose and it makes learning utilitarian obviously, it has, it's got to be,



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I'm back to where we were at the beginning. It has to be for a purpose, you have to learn for the purpose. So we need, the church is dying so let's train more lay people to be evangelists, you know, that's our, that would be kind of what we say in the Methodist church. And in doing so what do we do then about training people? Or what do we do that about the stuff that you were talking about, Clare, about being an ordinary everyday layperson, trying to live their life as close to Jesus, walking humbly with their God, trying to do the right thing, and just naturally being able to share stories about their faith...

Clare Watkins 14:35

[unclear]...sharing hope that's within them, all those things, which I think a lot of lay people do do but don't even know they're doing, so a bit of me thinks, no if lay formation, lay learning, faith learning isn't for holiness, I don't know what it is for. I mean, what would be the point? [laughs] But possibly if anyone's learning and of course if you're a minister, you know you're living out your call to holiness in a particular way, so you need to be equipped for that. But I want yeah, I just wonder if we've lost sight of the real spiritual telos of what we're doing in education across the different sites of learning, I think.

Simon Sutcliffe 15:10

Yeah, and I guess, and I'm wondering, now, I'm checking myself a little bit because I, I do, and I don't think I just mean this about theological learning, either, just all learning is that there is a, there is a justice arc somewhere that all learning is about, for me, is about making the world a better place. And so there's a, and I'm wondering, now, if I actually I do have a reason why I want people to learn theology. And partly that is because I want the world to be a better place. And so actually, I'm not just saying, Yeah, you just learn for learning's sake, but I would say the same for learning maths or music or, or how to fish or any of those, it's about what can we do to the world becomes better.

Clare Watkins 15:56

But the theological account of learning, whether it's a theological account of maths learning or faith learning, does, it seems to me, it carries with it, not an assumption exactly, but a, a sense of what the world being a better place might look like. And that's not our children are going to grow up and earn 60,000 pounds, you know, by the time they're 30, that that's, I mean there may be goods in relation to that,



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human goods. But I think there is something about the Christian idea about what makes the world a better place, which might be to do with eco justice, it might be to do with alleviating material poverty. And fundamentally, it's to do with holiness, which includes all those sorts of things. So you know, I think losing sight of that, let's look at it the other way, remembering that can actually mitigate against militate against the tendency to kind of instrumentalise this sort of in terms of equipping and training.

Simon Sutcliffe 16:49

Yeah.

Emma Pavey 16:50

It sounds like there would be merit then in reversing the direction of learning to equip ministers and trainers and have them somehow learn from the lay, ordinary Christian in some way.

Clare Watkins 17:02

Imagine!

Emma Pavey 17:02

Rather than vice versa

Simon Sutcliffe 17:03

I know.

Clare Watkins 17:04

And of course, we probably all know wise, often older, you know, experienced pastors who have done exactly that, you know, so I can say, or so academics, so Kevin Kelly, moral theologian who died a few years back, but he was insistent that he was an academic, but that he always ran a parish, it was always, was always involved in parish ministry, whilst he was an academic, because he said, that's the only way that he could do proper what he would call moral theology was he needed to be in touch with what people were really living. So I think there are people who I think have embodied that. But that is not part of the way that we've structured learning in our church communities, I don't think at all.



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Simon Sutcliffe 17:43

That's right. And certainly, I would look at the the rest of the corpus of stuff that we as the Learning Network deliver and offer, and a lot of it is kind of skill-based, knowledge-based, you know, this is what you need to know in order to do this role, this is the skill that you need in order to be able to do that. And within the Learning Network, what I do have is that I've got access to and I get to hear stories of just ordinary Methodists who are just going about, you know, trying to work out how to, you know, how to live in a declining church with depleted resources all around them, you know, and still serve their communities and still love their, you know, the folk around them. And at least we get to hear those stories. And then that's when we as a team, then get to be able to say, 'A re you hearing these stories in your part of the world, too? Because we are. So is there anything we can do to help people who keep telling those same stories?' And so then for me, then that's the, we wouldn't really talk about a curriculum in the Learning Network. But what it means is that the curriculum meets a need, rather than sets up a barrier or a boundary that says, right, you must get to this point. But interestingly, anybody who then has an official role, particularly in, around worship, so local preachers, and then for those groups, we say oh no, there's a thing you have to meet.

Clare Watkins 19:04

But I wonder if that's because, and I'm not I'm not picking you up, Simon. This isn't meant to kind of trip you up. But I was just interested and I would expect someone to call me out on this as well, that you talked about the Learning Network team, listening to stories so that they can identify the need that they answered, and I'm sure that's the right and good thing to do. The risk of that is that it assumes that what you, what you guys are doing in the network, are supplying an answer to a need, rather than the other way around to take up your point, Emma, about, you know, maybe, maybe we should be flipping this to sort of like, what is, what is the institutional church, the clerical cast in the church, how are they actually intentionally learning and being formed by those lay experiences, Now, I know from what you said that you, you would broadly agree with that, but the language is a giveaway too because I think that's the patterning of our institutional thinking, I think.



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Simon Sutcliffe 19:56

Yeah absolutely. And, and if we didn't, if we didn't deliver on the needs of the people we wouldn't have, we'd be removed from office.

Clare Watkins 20:03

Exactly!

Simon Sutcliffe 20:04

We wouldn't have a job. I guess the other good thing, and I hope, I mean, I can't speak for all my colleagues, I, I, they're a great bunch so I'm sure they do, is that we do get, so, one of the things that I have to say is I get to, like, sometimes I get to whisper in the ears of power. So because I hear these stories, but they're far removed from the places of power where they might be able to feed those stories in and I can say you do know what it's like on the ground, do you? You have remembered what these people, what it is that's going on there. And so when we're busy faffing about thinking about, you know, oh we need a new, a new report or a new piece of work doing, to say, is that really the most important piece of work we need to do? Because that's not what's going to hit the ground. And that's not how it's going to be heard when you get there. So we do have that. And I think that's quite a unique role actually, in the Methodist church that we sit in that kind of intermediary space. But yeah, I take your point, we still deliver a service in the end, as educationalists, yeah. And, and, some of my colleagues wouldn't consider themselves to be educational leaders, they would consider themselves to be trainer or development practitioners and would want to shy away from any language about learning in, in that sense. You know, my very title is interesting LDO, Learning and Development Officer, and often wondering, what does, what separates the learning and development out? And there was an interesting, we've got a Facebook page for, for the Learning Network, and somebody had posted something about, you know, what was it some of the experiences that you've learned through? And it quickly moved into a conversation about what do we mean by learning? What do we mean by development? And what do we mean by training?

Clare Watkins 21:46

Absolutely.



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Simon Sutcliffe 21:47

To those sorts of questions.

Emma Pavey 21:48

And that question of power, the place of power, you know, thinking about what we were just saying that maybe that isn't the place of power, you know, what the lay people are doing or that ordinary people are doing is, has great power in it. Untapped in a way? Yeah. How do you do that, then? I mean, I know that you've maybe not enacted this, but studied the way that we see what's going on. Do you want to talk a bit about your project?

Clare Watkins 22:12

Yeah. So I think I've always had a hunch about this, partly because I'm a lay woman in a, in a very clerically structured kind of church, which I love, I hasten to add, but, not, not being a lay woman in that church, particularly, but, but you know, I do love the church. But so I've always had an instinct about the importance of formation in ordinary and hope, living holiness in ordinary. And I think that's, that's what sharpens my attentiveness to the research we did so that when James Butler and I started working on this Methodist Learning project and looking at the way in which people learn faith, in a whole load of sites, including sites of formal learning, of course, as well as informal. What keeps coming through is the sense that actually what is most profound for most people where ever they are, but particularly for lay people is the chance conversation. James and I always talk about the dog, the dog walk, you know, the people you bump into on the dog walk and have really a few minutes conversation with every day, for years. That's the kind of locus that people turn to, or they say something about, you know, what happened in that conversation after church over a cup of tea. And what's very striking is that once professional educators pick this up they go, 'Oh right, well, we'll use that, that's a really helpful insight. So what we'll do...', and there was a case in one of our project sites, where the minister picked up on this and said, 'Well, okay, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to actually go to the tea and coffee after church and I'll, I'll get people to talk about what I preached about.' Completely kills the conversation dead, completely misses the point that this as soon as you start trying to formalise these things, they become something else. Now there may be there may be good in that don't get me wrong, and there may be learning in that. But it's a very different kind



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of thing from the kind of consistent air-you-breathe type of learning that we were observing here.

But your question, which I haven't answered is well so what do you do about that? And I think there are a number of things. I think that a growing appreciation of that reality would significantly change some of the thinking and structural thinking that we were just described in all our churches, I think it could change the way in which we educate our ministers considerably. Not necessarily in terms of curriculum content, but actually in terms of epistemological assumptions and outcome assumptions. So that would be a kind of formal way in which those things come into play. But I'm also increasingly of the view that there's something about allowing these fragmentary, largely hidden, largely undervalued lay realities, to become recognised and valued so that, so that people can recognise, recognise them and name them and narrate them in a way that is appropriate to them, rather than having them kind of engineered, which is the temptation I think, to actually let them be, but to actually have I think about I've got in my own head a sort of like first responder. That there may be people within a congregation who are able to listen in to a conversation. This may or may something, a gift that a minister should have, an ordained minister should have, who can listen to a conversation, can attend to it, and can name the grace that is happening there. And it's actually by surfacing those things that they begin to gain the power of authority that is already theirs, but somehow doesn't have the transformative power that it probably needs to have for the wider community. And those sound very soft things. And I think they are in the same way that any shift in for example, a household dynamic is a soft thing. But we also know, family systems, there isn't, and indeed organisational system theories, you only need a small, soft change, to change everything, because it changes the culture. And I think it's the culture change that is really the difficult and essential thing here. So even just having those conversations about these things. If you if enough people have these conversations, it will change the way in which we understand what's going on. On a very simple level, I would love it if we all belonged to churches where people didn't just assume that there was this great kind of mass of people who needed educating, and obviously no-one says this, but the implication is like they need to know stuff that we know. So we're going to tell them stuff, and then they'll know it. And of course, we might learn things back in return. But basically, that's the dynamic If we could get rid of that dynamic, things would



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be, you know, different. And for me, that's the theological point. Because what that really is saying that, you know, it goes back to Matthew 23, 8? I might have made a mistake there. 'Call no one teacher' you know, so the only person who teaches is God. So this is, learning formation is an act of the Spirit. And it's attending to that that all of us should be interested in.

Emma Pavey 26:38

I think that's interesting about that idea of surfacing and why we would do that. And so there's room for just letting things stay hidden, but also for surfacing them for the transformation of the community sort of to enable that gift to be used for, for God. I think that's really nice that, that, what did you say, something about the grace, noticing the grace, no what was it?

Clare Watkins 27:03

Naming the grace?

Emma Pavey 27:04

Naming the grace, yeah, I feel a podcast title coming on. It moves us nicely to thinking about your methodology as well, as did you want to talk a bit about your influences and what you've been doing, Simon?

Simon Sutcliffe 27:17

Yeah, although I would just pick up one thing Clare said, because I guess, as educators worked in various settings, we kind of instinctively know. I knew that when I did proper classes that most of the learning happened in the common room, not in my classroom, because it happens over the cup of coffee, and it happens over in those, you know, in the pub later, two weeks later, when you think everybody's forgotten everything that you've talked about, and I was thinking about my children. I suspect that they learn more about their identity, their gender, their sexuality, with their friends than ever with, anything they did with me or their mum or with a family member so it was, you know, it's those conversations that really kind of mattered, wasn't it? I guess the same is true of church life. That could be either in church settings, or any, school gate or the post office queue or, you know, anywhere in those places that are just those kind of little incidental moments, I guess. And there's something, there is a bit of that in the kind of work that I'm doing, that wants to draw on that conversationalist, you know, that conversational dialogue



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that happens between people and, and naming that as the really important space. And but I'm particularly interested in my own commitment to, so, a lot of people who write around pedagogy will talk about what is the, what is the educator's commitments? What are their value systems that inform the way in which they, they do their teaching? And I think that's kind of what we're talking about, what are the things that we value, and that we place value on that say, actually, this is really important. And I do this, because when I see this work, and so we, we've named a lot about our own experience of church life. And that has somehow informed the way in which we feel that our pedagogies and all where learning happens, and I, I'm very committed to environmental justice, my first kind of studies, before theology were all around science and all those sort of things. And I'm quite committed to that. And I just love being outdoors, just put outdoors for anywhere. And somebody put me on to the work of Donna Haraway, who I never know how to describe Donna Haraway. But some people might describe her as belonging to the kind of new material feminist kind of movement. She's, she tends to stand away from any form of description, but I would definitely say she was a scientist. She is a philosopher, and she's a feminist scholar. Those, I think those three things are definitely true. Where, where you fit her in niche brackets, I think is probably more difficult. And it was her book 'Staying with the Trouble' that really spoke to me. And that was the book that I'd been put on to. And she does a lot of stuff in that book. And it's, it's not the easiest book to read. And if you're not into, if you don't like lots of poetry and lyricism, and people using words that you thought you knew, but now are used differently, or splitting words up to make them sound different, then you might find Haraway's work a struggle, but I quite liked it.

But what I, what really struck me about Haraway's work is that even though she's talking about environmental justice, her main thrust seems to be, and then, and I discovered others that felt this as well, that her main thrust is epistemological in the end. She's, she's asking a question about, if we want the planet to be in a better position than it currently is, it's not just about doing lots of things. It's about changing the way we think about how we think. And there was this quote that she, I can't remember the whole quote, but it begins with, 'It matters what thoughts we think thoughts with' and that idea that I suddenly realised, you know, if we keep doing the same, around kind of the way in which we do theological learning, then we'll always keep producing the same result at the end. And so, so I tried to bring in



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some more different, and again, it's playing with words a little bit. But interestingly, it seems to have taken on more more than words, they've become more than metaphors for me and for groups of people that I work with.

So one, for instance, is the idea of formation that we've talked about, that I tend to talk about, I have used composting, and compost as a word for that. And I thought I was being very clever when I used that word. And it turns out, there's people doing it all over the place. And so a friend of mine, Al Barrett and his co author, Ruth Harley wrote a book called 'Being Interrupted'. And in there, I think, I think it's in that book where they talk about a resurrection from the compost heap. I know a couple of black theologians who have used composting language around thinking around racism, and the way that works. There's, over in the States we've bumped into somebody who's written a book, she's a soil scientist, and she's written a book called 'Composting Holy Ground'. There was a podcast, a really popular podcast, that's called 'Composting Christianity'. And actually, they don't mean composting Christianity, they make composting the church, but they call it composting Christianity. And Al Barrett who was talking about, and myself have just written an article about composting patriarchal forms of masculinity or masculinity as mastery. And it's become a kind of way of thinking about what happens when stuff decomposes, and 're-composes', which is what I think formation is in people and how theological education kind of helps to do that decomposing and 're-composing'. And it's kind of taken on a life of its own, that we've now got a gathering happening on a farm in Bristol, somewhere in May, where a lot, all these other people that have been thinking about composting, we managed to get them all back together all around. And we don't know where this is going to lead. In good eco terms, it could lead anywhere or nowhere.

And all of that comes from a hunch that God in creation already offers all that we need to learn. Everything's already there, but because humanity has distanced itself from the rest of creation, so there was another great philosopher Bayo, I can never say his last name properly, Akomolafe. There's a conversation on Facebook that he was asked to redefine nature because the way in which we define nature always puts humans here and the rest of the world there as if humans aren't part of nature, and he was kind of saying, you know. But that distancing means that we we stop learning from it, certainly in the Global North. There are indigenous communities that probably still are much closer to the soil, who do learn with the earth and



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through the earth. And I think that's, so I'm trying to find ways in which that language and those metaphors become more than that. But primarily because, I was going to use that horrible phrase of saving the planet as if, which puts humans at the centre of that process. But if we want to live in a planet that's better than it currently is, it's not just about thinking about recycling, as important as that is. But reframing all that we think about and, and the way in, what Haraway, reframing not just what we think about but how we think about things we think about.

Emma Pavey 34:31

Which is in the sense also the role of theology, isn't it? I was thinking about this, the way that she de-centres humanity and the way that theology in a sense de-centres humanity, in the conversation there's quite a parallel there.

Simon Sutcliffe 34:43

Yeah, she wouldn't thank us. Haraway's not a...

Emma Pavey 34:46

We can do it. She doesn't have to do it.

Clare Watkins 34:48

But I think, I think that's quite an, that's an interesting point, though, because I think one of my observations that Haraway's work, which I do enjoy and like, I think is important and it's really helped me in a number of places where I've kind of used her thinking, particularly the epistemological insights there, but the correct de-centering of the human being also means for her de-centering well, no, getting rid of God. And I think that underlying that there is an assumption that somehow religion, God actually, is a part of our human power move. And I think she's not wrong in that that is what's happened. But that's to do with our failure to, to really be what God calls us to be, which is creatures. And that well a bit like you said there about the podcast that was actually talking about composting the church rather than Christianity, I think sometimes, you know, she, she's, she just conflates God, the transcendent, what's the phrase she uses, you know, the sky god, somehow she doesn't want anything to do with people looking up. But, but that's a very odd refusal of something that actually is quite, as far as we can look back, you know, even the kind of relics of Neanderthal life, you know, that human beings have looked up. To deny that as part of the creatureliness of us, because of the ways in which that's



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been perverted and corrupted to become something other than it was meant to be. Because actually, what that God thing does is put us in our place. It exactly puts us in the chthulucene naturally, that's exactly where that correct relationship with God puts us. We don't need to get rid of the transcendent to do that.

Emma Pavey 36:15

It's just as much of a power move to get rid of God, as it is to use God for our own purposes.

Clare Watkins 36:21

Yes.

Simon Sutcliffe 36:22

Yes.

Clare Watkins 36:23

But I want to, I want to kind of push you back a little bit to this compost thing, and I mean you said something about composting and re- something

Simon Sutcliffe 36:32

Composing. Decomposing and re-composing.

Clare Watkins 36:32

Decomposing and re-composing. And it reminded me of a trope that we discovered in our learning project research around deconstruction, as part of formation and learning, which I have a huge problem with, and a bit of me's like, well, are we just, are we just using sort of more kind of organic, friendly language to, to do, to describe something which in the end, still supposes that people somehow need to be deconstructed in order to be reconstructed, particularly ministry training, if you find that language, though not only there. Or is there something significantly different about the language of decomposing and re-composing as applied to learning? Or have I misunderstood how you want it to work? So maybe the bottom line of the question is, using that language, what difference does that really make?

Simon Sutcliffe 36:34

I think it makes two, hmm, I don't know, let me name them all, and then I'll give you



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the number of differences. I think some things around process. So it's interesting, you know, sometimes you can go to conferences or other spaces that talk about dismantling something, or, you know, breaking something up. And I think the process is different to that kind of almost smashing or breaking. Decomposition is an intimate affair. It can only happen when bodies rub up against each other. And so this is why it comes back to the kind of conversational stuff, the flip conversation you just happen to have when you're walking the dog or whatever, in that when we talk about, when I talk about it, I'm not talking about somebody reading a book and thinking, 'Oh, I now think about that differently'.

Clare Watkins 38:07

Yeah, no, yeah.

Simon Sutcliffe 38:08

This is a kind of, it's almost somatic. There's a kind of bodily embodied bit to it. And it's, I guess, it's about that sense that just being a human being means that there's always bits of me, physically and in my head, that are dying and reforming all the time. And what happens, what might happen, is a chance encounter conversation with somebody suddenly, then, means that one way I thought that I thought I knew something isn't the same way anymore. So it's not necessarily about knowledge but like, again, coming back to that learning thing, it's not necessarily about, despite the fact that I try and give knowledge, do cognitive stuff. The other thing that's necessary with composting is you can't have all the same stuff. So it has to be in, you know, the mantra is greens and browns for compost, you've got to make sure you get the right mixtures. And it's slow, generally, and you need invertebrates and fungi and bacteria, so you need lots of things that kind of come together in order to, for a good composting to work. So then part of my role as a facilitator in a learning community, and I'd like to, if we get a chance, to talk about what do we mean by a learning community, part of my role in that is to try and make sure there is as much of all the different bits and that they can recognise each other as decomposing and re-composing agents for each other.

Which then takes me to the stuff we were talking about, right at the beginning, Clare, and the stuff that's really important in your work around the stuff, everyday stuff that happens in our lives that shape who we become and what we are, and then asking the question in that compost heap, so how does all that, you know,



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being the mother of four children and having a world where you work in this particular way, and whatever else happened, you know, the dog dies, or, you know, how does all that shape the way you think about this particular theological thing?

Clare Watkins 40:05

What I think is really helpful there, and I, and it's that's, that's really helpful to me is to expand the importance of that image, although I think I'd want to be clear that it's still, composting still, for me, would need to be kept very much an image rather than anything bigger or more kind of, yeah, it is agency, because I think part of the problem with the language of dismantling or deconstruction is that it implies agency so, and usually human agency as well. And that's, again, something that James and I, in our research, we're very aware of, that although formal educational institutions will often teach and professional teachers were interested in the processes or the workings of deconstruction and reconstruction, normal human beings in the course of their lives with the children and the dog dying and everything, they go through enough deconstruction, thank you very much, they do not need someone else to kind of add to that, because the composting is actually, I would suggest, something that is, is quite natural to the way in which most of us live our lives. And the way you've described, I think, just there is really helpful.

But then this added thing that you suggested that one of the things that the best kind of more intentional learning can do is to add the sorts of matter to any one bit of compost, that is going to either, well it's going to change, if you like, the chemistry of what's going on. And the importance of time, I think is that again, that was a really huge thing for us that people were used to getting courses and outcomes and assessments and, you know, justifying why we've taught this in this particular way. This kind of learning, faith learning, takes, takes time and takes fragmentary time in a way that is much more akin to the sorts of processes that we see in an organic process such as composting, than it is to the sorts of intentional processes that we try and codify and put in place and structure. So yeah, I think that's a really helpful resonance.

Simon Sutcliffe 41:48

I also find the thing with composting is that there's, there's no such thing as waste.



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Clare Watkins 41:53

Yeah.

Simon Sutcliffe 41:54

So it means any experience in life, good or negative, it's not cast aside, if that's how you want to put it. Emma and I have a friend Sam who, Sam Ewell, who tells a story. So he's the most prolific composter you probably could ever meet. And he tells the story of the moment, he kind of got it, it was when he was in Brazil, and it was a, somebody else who spoke to him. And he picked up a banana skin and said to him, 'Who told you this had stopped being good. When God created it, he said, it was good, who's told you now it's not good?' And I think there's something around seeing compost and formation, formation as compost in that sense, that says, actually, all of me is involved in this process, it's fully embodied fully all of me is involved in the process.

Clare Watkins 42:43

Because it can't be otherwise.

Simon Sutcliffe 42:45

That's right.

Clare Watkins 42:45

And actually, if you're learning whilst in pain, or you're learning while you're grieving something, that, that will be part of your learning. That's what the composting image, I think, brings to light, very helpful.

Simon Sutcliffe 42:56

And this then might make this too utilitarian for us again. It's all about, you know, can I get away with it or not? Which is that compost, what is left is life giving. And so what's left is stuff that grows and gives life to more. And it's that thing again about do I want the world to be a better place.

Clare Watkins 43:17

I was so hoping you'd hold off from that because that's why I wanted to sort of say, this is an image that's really helpful, it has resonances of what I would want to say, in a different way. The problem with any of those kinds of metaphors or images is that



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you can push them into places where actually they stop saying...

Simon Sutcliffe 43:30

They break.

Clare Watkins 43:31

...what they really want to say. And I think, you know, this, this idea of, of learning as a composting thing is, yeah, I can see how that would fit a lot of the insights that we're having too.

Emma Pavey 43:41

I wonder too, if a composting image implies a sort of egalitarian utopia, but ignores the power dynamics of certain elements that are going in have more say, then of course, it doesn't fit as a, as a metaphor.

Simon Sutcliffe 43:53

So with a physical compost heap, different elements have more power at different points of the composting. And so at various times, you know, one will be, you'll need more of one or one will be more dominant than the other. I guess that is also true in this kind of formation, you know. At some points, you know, my family life might be the biggest thing that's impacting on, you know, my growing and learning and rediscovering whatever else I am doing in that process. And other times it might be, you know, the stuff that I've heard in a sermon or, you know, whatever else. So that can also happen within the compost heap. One of the interesting things is what my relationship is to it, to the compost heap, if I'm the facilitator of learning, so I said you know I need all these bits...

Clare Watkins 44:38

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Simon Sutcliffe 44:38

...Do I become the kind of puppet master...

Clare Watkins 44:41

Exactly.



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Simon Sutcliffe 44:41

...or that kind of engineer? And, and I mean that, you know, let's get rid of the compost heap metaphor altogether. Even just talking about education, what, what is my role in that space? And I believe it, I'm not just saying the right things, I believe it. I am a student as much as the people in the room are. I can say that. I'm learning all the time. In fact, most days, I might only be one page ahead than everybody else in the room. But my role isn't the same as all the other people that are in there.

Clare Watkins 44:41

Exactly Yeah. But for me that, I've really struggled with that. So exactly the same thing and really, yeah, could just repeat everything you said from my own kind of feelings. But that's to me where two things come into play, which are part of the theological action research method. One is this idea of the non-expert expert, which I write a little bit about in 'Disclosing Church' and Helen Cameron and I often discussed, she would, she would be much more reluctant than I was to call on theological expertise whereas if I'm in a conversation, I go, 'Oh, that reminds me of something I read in Thomas Aquinas. I have no problem with that, I think it's entirely okay. Now, her reading, I think might be and I need to hear this is that that could be a shutting down of a convo, you know, that it could be drawing on an expertise that actually prevents a conversation and if that's what it does, that's wrong. But the way, the way I began to understand that the sort of non-expert expert is that, as a matter of fact, there are things that I quite like, and I've had the privilege to study and I picked up along the way, that I think are quite interesting. And if I can inhabit that life without assuming that my, my so-called expertise is somehow better than, has more authority than, is corrective of, and actually just sort of say, you know, this is, this is kind of person Clare is, is that she's made up of all this weird shit, you know. Did I ask if I could swear on the podcast? Too late, done it. I don't know how you're going to edit that out. And alongside that, recognise that the other people in the conversation will have their own kinds of expertise that may not be recognised socially as expert, of course, that's, that's where the dynamic becomes difficult.

So everything then depends on being able to form the kinds of conversational relationship where the so-called expert is not the expert in the room. So I think that's one. That's one thing. And I think then the other thing is where the, the four



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voices of theology becomes almost a formalisation of that, or a kind of, kind of shorthand describing that, because it's genuinely saying that...

Emma Pavey 45:17

Can you just briefly say what those four voices are?

Clare Watkins 47:00

Okay, yes, thank you. So the four voices, which is the, one of the ways in which I kind of make talk about what we're learning, in theological action research recognises that God reveals Godself through a variety of ways, and that we've kind of mapped this out very, what's the word, approximately into these four voices of the, of the operant, which is like what, how people live their faith, the embodied forms of faith, the espoused, which is the kinds of accounts that practitioners give of their practice. That might be something akin to Jeff Astley's understanding of ordinary theology. And then you've got normative theology, which would be actually different for different Christians, but would be about the received traditions that have got a kind of normative authority. And then formal theological voices, which would be from the Academy, could be theological, could be sociological, could be all sorts of things, it's to do with that kind of so-called expert learning that we recognise socially in that way. But the point about the four voices is that it says that actually, none of those are expert, and in fact, none of them are really out there even discrete, because there is no academic who doesn't have this other stuff going on. And there is no normative that doesn't come from lived experience and practice, you know, this, these things are deeply, deeply interpenetrated.

And actually, compost is quite an interesting image to describe that as well. And that the Spirit speaks to all of these things. And that that, then, when that's fully appropriated by everyone in the conversation, and that, I sigh because that is a big ask, that actually gives permission for the oddities of the formal voice to come up alongside the power of, of the practice of the Christian who works for the homeless, or whatever it is to, to be not, it's not even a matter of equality, that they are actually different sorts of things, doing different kinds of stuff in the conversation. So that, for me informs the way that I would understand teaching. I genuinely just I think, you know, I think what I do here at the university or did at seminary, or do if I run a course in the parish, I don't think it's unimportant. But it is a tiny thing, compared to the rest of what's going on. And I think it's, that changes, again, in this kind of soft



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systems way, if you really appropriate that, that changes the way you do everything. And I think, I think at its best, it can even change the way it's received by the, the learning communities.

Simon Sutcliffe 49:12

I mean, I think I yeah, I mean, I wouldn't disagree with that and I think certainly the four voices and I love that actually, kind of, that in that kind of compost-y kind of way I've not thought of it before, in that way before. I'm just, you know, I was just reflecting as you were talking, and thinking, and so what do I, what do I actually think I'm doing when I'm in that role? And there's something around conversation again, I think for me, so I never think about necessarily, let's just pick a, I don't know, choose ecclesiology. So let's say the study of the church, the way I want to approach that with a group who might be wanting to explore the nature of the church, the theology of the church, would be, these are some of the conversations that the church has had about itself. Some of the people have thought like this. Some of the people will talk like that. There's been, there's been this guy called Avery Dulles who wanted to do this, do you know what I mean? And just, and just to have lots of those things and say, 'Right. That's the conversation that we've all been having.' Part of the thing I bring to the conversation, to this conversation is, I've been doing a bit of that talking as well. I've been in that conversation, and I'm just bringing it into this room. I used to talk, I've probably moved on from this, but in my earliest days of thinking around education, I used to think about theology as a, as a party in a big house. And that, you know, you've got a couple of people talking in one room, you've got, you know, I don't know, let's think of some past, we've got Aquinas talking to...

Clare Watkins 49:21

Karl Barth

Simon Sutcliffe 49:34

Karl Barth

Clare Watkins 49:45

That would be a great conversation.



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Simon Sutcliffe 50:31

That would be a conversation, wouldn't it? So they're having a conversation in there. And then, in another room, there's Catherine Keller talking to Sallie McFague. And I overhear something? and I, 'Ooh, can you come into this room? You'd be really interested in this conversation.' And part of my job is doing that and bringing those conversations together. And then what I want to try and do in a space is get other people talking about their conversation, in light of this conversation that's happened in the, in the church. And the study of theology is so broad, you know, we've got so many disciplines that feed into other disciplines, and are interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary themselves. It means that normally, there's somewhere, somebody has got somewhere that he can say, 'Oh, yeah, I know about this. I had to do a course at work once where we did, we learnt all about this.' And that can come into the conversation, and suddenly it enriches that space. I also think some of the composting is around helping people recognise I think, we were talking about it before, Clare, you were talking about it where about you know, that we're all shaped in all these different kinds of ways. But most people don't know that that's how they've been shaped. And one of the things that I think, one of the things that I've witnessed, I think, as I've I've helped to form these learning communities, which actually are just big conversations, one of the things that I've learned is that people can figure out why they disagree with each other much better, when they know why they've arrived where they are. That's why I think like that, and, I don't know, we'd probably call it reflexivity in the, in the academic world, but I wouldn't want to give it as grand a title.

But in the Methodist Church, for instance, you know, we've just gone through, finished a process a few years ago, and I know the Church of England are currently doing it, called God in Love Unites Us, it was around the sexuality bit. And I was part of some of the conversations around that. And we did some kind of, I did a little informal, it wasn't part of my work in other spaces, I did other bits of work of theologically around that. And what was really helpful for a lot of people is to work out how they, 'Oh, that's, I come to this from this place. That's why I feel like that. And actually, that person isn't out and out wrong. It's just that I come to here from a different place.' And that's something that I didn't often find in theological colleges where people would defend their position. And almost that was, that was kind of a badge of honour, I can defend my position. Whereas in these spaces, they seem



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much gentler spaces for people to say, 'Ah yeah, I know why I feel like that now, because of the way I was raised this way.

Clare Watkins 52:48

This is my experience.

Emma Pavey 53:21

We probably have a few minutes left. Are there things that you were hoping we would talk about that we haven't yet?

Clare Watkins 53:28

I'm conscious you mentioned learning, learning community, and have used that language in the way you describe what you do?

Simon Sutcliffe 53:33

Yeah. So for me, that became quite important in the work that I do now. Because I think the learning community in a more academic or formal setting is almost, almost a kind of given. I was trying, I was talking to my son who's training to be a teacher, who's, well, is now a teacher. And, you know, he said things like, 'Oh, yeah, that would, they said don't ever praise a young person for doing something that we expected them to do, you know. If they put their hand up, don't say, "Oh well, well done for putting your hand up", we expect them to do that. So don't tell them that it's good.' And I got a sense actually, you're right, I didn't have to work very hard to create a learning community in a classroom or a seminar room because everybody expects, everybody already had an expectation of what that space was, and how to behave in it and how to use it. Whereas I do have to do that in these spaces. But I'm conscious also of another difference, which is that I've got, I've got no equivalent to what was then the tutorial relationship. So if somebody, I mean, I don't think it has ever happened, but if somebody is unravelling, rather than decomposing slowly, I've got no way of pastorally picking that up. And there's a kind of pastoral responsibility in learning. So creating the right community in which they can pastorally care for one another and in that sort of space, I found, I found it tricky but also hugely rewarding then when it happens. So what I love is when new people come, and then they'll just drop me an email and say, 'Oh I've never been in a place where everybody will just put up with my wacky ideas'. Do you know what I mean? And it's just, oh, that's the kind of community we were looking for.



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Clare Watkins 55:13

And I know a lot of what you describe is being done on zoom as well.

Simon Sutcliffe 55:14

That's right.

Clare Watkins 55:14

When I hear learning community I think about communities of practice and Wenger and, and that seems to me to actually be a little bit different from what you're describing.

Simon Sutcliffe 55:20

Yeah.

Clare Watkins 55:21

And I wonder, this isn't, this isn't to alarm you. But I wonder if actually, the problem with those zoom learning communities is actually if somebody was really, really in trouble, it would be almost impossible, actually, to, to follow up and that there is something, and not only that, that the that if Wenger is even a bit right, the most powerful learning that goes on is actually it within whatever community they're a part of. So any course I think runs the risk of abstracting people from what is their primary, like the community of learning, community of practice, and giving them some other learning, which they, would they then have to connect up. But that's, I think, exacerbated by, by zoom based learning, which isn't to say it's not a good thing. But it just, it raises another set of questions, I think about the ways in which, you know, this learning, this faith learning in ordinary done so preoccupied by goes on and is, I think clearly the most powerful form of learning, and how you then join that up with these sorts of other experiences, which are usually taking people outside of that primary community of practice and community of learning.

Simon Sutcliffe 56:30

Yeah it's fascinating. Because as, there are three streams that I help to facilitate, and, and they all started during lockdown, so that we had a lot of people that were interested during, because people had a little bit more time and they've waned a little since then, but still popular enough to keep running. But they, the thing that



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came really interesting is that email started to flow. So I would, you know, I'd send emails with a zoom link. And I'd always BCC all the participants so they wouldn't know each other's emails. But suddenly, I get an email back saying, 'Oh, I had a conversation with my minister on Sunday. And this, I told him about this, or he said this, and I said, Oh, I know about him. And we had a conversation about it.' And I'd just get these little kind of emails, but and it was at that point I thought, oh we've, something's forming here, there's something forming, and all right, it was around me, in that sense. But then people in the actual zoom conversations, what I realised was, I needed early on in the conversations to create Breakout Rooms, really early on, just to do the 'since last time, what's happened?'

Clare Watkins 57:39

Yes, that's right. Because they do the learning with you, and then suddenly nothing happens.

Simon Sutcliffe 57:44

That's right, yes. For some, they got that immediately. For others, they, they needed a little bit of help, you know, so I'd say things like, you know, did you hear something on Sunday at church that resonated, did something that jarred something that, sometimes I've, it's my very basic way of trying to help people assess how they're responding to something, which is the, I call it the wows, ouches and hmms method. What made you go wow, I love that what made you ouch, I'm not so keen on that. And what makes you go hmm, I need to think about that a little bit more. And so just asking that, you know, since last week, what made you go wow, and what made you go ouch what maybe do you need to think a little bit more. And I realised that they need, that space was needed long before we did any more building or scaffolding or whatever language we want to use from that world of teaching. And I think that's what helps to create those kind of safer communities. And I think there is something around safety, I read, there's a lovely little Grove booklet by Mike Higton, 'Vulnerable learning', which talks about his own PhD process. Hans Frei, I think it was, who his PhD was on. And yeah, and you know again, this fits with some of the composting, and he, he writes in that book about the kind of the dying to self, you know, there's there was a kind of dying, and he relates that to the disciples that there, there was a way of knowing that had to kind of die for them, in order for a new way of knowing to kind of take on. That happens



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Simon Sutcliffe, Clare Watkins and Emma Pavey

in these processes, but in order, and he calls it vulnerable learning, in order for that to happen, safe spaces are required for that. And that made me reflect on my own experience of academic theology, and my own experience as a learner in those environments where sometimes it didn't always feel that safe.

Clare Watkins 59:30

And then the importance there that, again, we've not really talked about, of the pedagogical relationship, so I'm just thinking about Mike's, Mike's thought are vulnerable learning and his supervisor, and as a doctoral supervisor, myself, you know that there's, I don't know whether the university management know this, lots more goes on in that relationship if it's working well, than the kind of supervising of the writing of the thesis in the kind of formal sense because it needs to be built on a relationship of some trust and you know, Aquinas, Aquinas knew this, so everyone thinks about the Summa as this great kind of monolithic thing. It's a teaching document, you know, it's actually about a, set up as a conversation between the teacher and the learner and the, and the questions on the basis that, he takes this very seriously, that nobody can teach anyone only God teaches anyone so all you can do as the so-called teacher is kind of be alongside people and open up spaces and, and ideas that maybe they haven't come across, that maybe God will work through and that the agency is all God's, but what becomes crucially important there is the, you talked about safety, which is one way I think about that the, the trustworthiness of a, of a relationship which is, which is shaped by certain kinds of love, I would suggest.

Emma Pavey 1:00:47

That seems like a really nice place to conclude. Because in our theme crafting hope that feels very hopeful. And so thank you very much both of you for your contribution. I hope you felt like you've had a space to air your crazy ideas, which weren't crazy at all of course.

Simon Sutcliffe 1:00:49

It does. Thank you.

Clare Watkins 1:01:04

Great conversation.