

Elizabeth Snader interviewed by Lexi Jackson on March 27, 2024

Lexi Jackson: So the first thing that I have to ask is, if you give your permission to be recorded and uploaded to our website.

Elizabeth Snader: Yes.

LJ: Okay. So the first thing I wanted to talk about was just your background information about yourself, and your experience here at UMW.

ES: Yeah. So I am a United Methodist pastor in the state of Virginia. I'm what's called a deacon, and so I'm, in the ordination process to become a deacon in the Virginia Conference. I started here at the CCC in July 2019, right before the pandemic and everything kind of fell apart. But, yeah, I went to seminary in DC, graduated in 2018, went to college, and graduated in 2015.

LJ: Where did you go to college?

ES: I went to Messiah University in Pennsylvania.

LJ: Okay.

ES: And then I went to Wesley Theological Seminary in DC for seminary. I had my master's in divinity and, yeah, I have loved working with college students. Campus ministry was a big part

of my college experience, and so when I heard about this job, I was like, oh my gosh. That would be such a fun job working with college students. I love Mary Washington. I love how invested, the whole campus is in social justice and also, education and community. So, yeah.

LJ: Do you know, like, the background information of the CCC, like, since before you were here and your time during here? Can you explain a little bit about that?

ES: So we have been in existence for a really long time actually. The CCC started not under that name, but we started, I think, as the Wesley Foundation, of Mary Washington College back in the 1940s. There was a group of women from some of our sponsoring churches. I think Fredericksburg United Methodist Church was one of those, that they would come and they would cook meals for students and students would just come and have meals and this community started. And, in 1963 is when we became officially the campus Christian community, and we are supported by some Protestant denominations such as the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and then some local, Episcopal and Lutheran churches and since then have been a place where students can come, can ask questions about faith and God and experience community and, yeah, service.

LJ: So would you say that that's, like, the main purpose here?

ES: Yeah. So the main purpose is to create a safer place for students to experience community with one another and and learn about God and learn about themselves and how all of that kind of intertwines into each other.

LJ: So has this building always been, like, the center or has it been moved a few times?

ES: Yeah. So this part of the building we're in, like, an addition. There is the original house portion of the building where, I think that was built in the forties as well. And I think the woman that lived there was crucial in the, kind of foundation of the CCC beginnings.

And so the house portion of the building was where everyone kind of met for a long time. There was, like, a big living room, a kitchen, and those types of things.

Now we have added two apartments where students can live. So we rent only to students. And I have my office up there. I have an admin who has an office up there. And so the upstairs house portion of the building has kind of been shifted more to, like, office apartment settings. And, then this part of the building was added in the nineties. There was a big campaign to build this big, kind of like what we call life fellowship center where people can come and hang out. We have a full kitchen, and just space for students to come during the week also for our events.

LJ: Okay. Do you guys have a lot of events during the week?

ES: Yeah. So we have, Monday nights, we have Bible talk where we kind of discuss a topic in the Bible. This semester, we're going through the Book of Mark, and earlier in the semester, we went through, sort of like the basics of faith, like what is church, who is Jesus, who is God, those types of things, and just had conversations to kind of learn more about maybe where we all have come from in our faith, maybe questions we may have that we want to talk about.

And then our big, weekly event is Thursday nights. We still do our free dinners for students. And, the churches that support our ministry are still providing those meals. And so that's a great time for students to come get a free meal. Sometimes the churches provide, like, an actual home cooked meal, which is great. And then sometimes they also provide money for us to order out, which is also fun. And then after dinner, we'll do either worship once every other week or we'll do an activity like a panel discussion or a game night or if it's, like, midterms time, like, self care night where we do kind of more relaxing, self care practices.

LJ: So, do you have some goals for the semester of what you would like to accomplish?

ES: Yeah. So we had a large group of seniors graduate. I think we had, like, 14 students that graduated last year. So that was really senior heavy last year. And so coming back this year, I think our purpose was just to kind of, we have a whole new leadership team, to just kind of like connect with one another and learn more about each other and really kind of like reestablish who we are as a group. And I think we've done that pretty well. We've met some new people this year, and that's been a really great experience. I think one of our goals was to have a successful spring retreat, and we just did that a few weeks ago, the weekend after spring break. And, we went to Massanutten. Had a great time away. Went to a lavender farm. Yeah.

LJ: When I was doing my initial research, I came across, in the Centennial History of Mary Washington, about a trip to Honduras in 2006. I think it was to help build houses and things like that, or I think it was schools. Do you guys do things like that now?

ES: So the CCC back in the past, I think they took maybe 3 or 4, like, bigger trips. They went to Honduras, Nicaragua, maybe a few other places, but we are lucky. We have, like, photograph books from, like, those trips, where the students took pictures, the staff took pictures, and they've been able to kind of, like, create these scrapbooks of those trips. So we've been able to look at those and think about their, you know, like, look at what it was like for them to go on those trips. I personally don't know a lot about those trips since I've started, But we do, as the CCC, one of our goals actually is to kind of get more involved in service.

This year, we actually made, like, tie fleece blankets for people who are experiencing homelessness. And the organization, Micah, from downtown Fredericksburg, we're gonna donate them to them so that they can hand them out to the people experiencing homelessness. We have, our leadership team met the other day. We were thinking about, in the future maybe doing some sort of, like, weekend, either trip or stay mission trip where we kinda, like, stay local and do service projects in our community. So we wanna get more involved with CORE and the, you know, the community service that they do as well.

LJ: So since you've been at Mary Washington, and around campus, are there any, like, physical changes, like, significant ones that you've noticed, that have, like, affected you?

ES: Let's see. Obviously, the pandemic, but, that was just it affected everyone, and kind of, like, made us rethink how we use space. Not only on campus, but off campus as well. I would say Ball Circle has been interesting. When I first started, we loved just, like, going and sitting on Ball Circle and just hanging out. And so over the past, like, 2 years, it's been on and off whether you can be on the ball circle or can't. I think sometimes the students miss that, and miss just the

freedom to just kind of, like, hang out there. And so, hopefully, the work will be done soon and we can resume hanging out in Ball Circle.

Lexi Jakson: Would you, like, host meetings there?

ES: I would do sometimes. So I do office hours on campus every week. And when it's nice out, it's nice to sit on Ball Circle and just have, you know, a few chairs of students coming. Out in gathering space. There was one semester we did, our Bible talk was on Ball Circle. The beginning of this, we started in the fall semester. So, for the beginning of the semester we would meet out on Ball circle.

I think another thing in the, like, regard to, like, campus is, was it Marshall, the one of the buildings that, like, is down the hill where I when I first started, I had a lot of 1st year students who lived in that building. And so now that it's closed well, it was, like, quarantine central for COVID, and now it's closed. And I think they're gonna rebuild, like, a new arts center

LJ: Right. I heard about that.

ES: And I think students are really excited about that. Also sad to have Marshall leave. Excited for the new, you know, the new spaces that will be created.

LJ: So how did, like, the pandemic, affect how you, like, held your Bible talks or other things like that?

ES: So we took the pandemic and the precautions that the college set very seriously. We moved a lot of our stuff to Zoom. So we would have Bible talk on Zoom, especially when the students were home for such a long period of time. But even when students started coming back, if it was nice outside, we could gather outside, or we would gather on Zoom. For our weekly dinners, what we would do is our supporting churches would send us money and we would order meals and students could come pick up a meal and go back to their dorm and then we would all get on Zoom and talk. So, yeah, we found creative ways to kind of adjust and still be together. Yeah.

LJ: Alright. Well, thank you so much