

Daryl Horton

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SPEAKERS

Daryl Horton, Mary Wilson

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- M** Mary Wilson 00:02
Hi, I'm Mary Wilson and today is December 15th, 2020. I am talking with my friend and colleague, Reverend Dr. Daryl Horton. We are smiling about that because we both graduated from Bright Divinity School this summer with our newly minted Doctor of Ministry degrees. We also knew each other back at Austin Presbyterian Seminary during our m-div (master of divinity degree) days. So yeah, Daryl and I have crossed paths. Welcome, Daryl and thank you. Thank you so much for doing this. I appreciate talking to you today.
- D** Daryl Horton 00:34
Thank you, Mary. It's a privilege to be with you.
- M** Mary Wilson 00:36
I want to start just by getting a little background story of who you are, so the listeners can get a familiarity with how you've come to be the minister that you are today.
- D** Daryl Horton 00:49
Okay, well, I'm a native austinite. And so I've been here to see a lot of things change.

M Mary Wilson 00:56
Oh, you're a unicorn.

D Daryl Horton 01:00
Yeah, native, native Austinite. All of my family still lives here, except for one sibling. Went through high school here and actually began my college education at TCU for undergrad, did not finish from there. That kind of makes the irony and the whole graduate school story even better, just doing those things. Originally, my training for school was in engineering. That's the work I did, before really started getting engaged in ministry. In 2020, it makes the 25th year that I've been preaching.

D Daryl Horton 01:43
Way back then at that point, I felt the call of God on my life. In the Baptist tradition, you make that public confession, that "This is what's happening," and the church begins to work with you and the pastor begins to mentor you. I've been working on that process for 25 years. It has its fun moments, it has its anxious moments - but never looked back. I'm very grateful that God would have the grace to allow me to, to serve in this capacity. I am currently serving in full time ministry at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, I serve as the assistant pastor there as well as the youth pastor. I've been doing that for the last 12 years, and very much enjoying that. I left the engineering semiconductor world to go full time at the church and that's where I've been serving. That's what I'm doing now, along with other engagements throughout the city.

M Mary Wilson 02:43
Yes and those engagements are plentiful. How many siblings do you have?

D Daryl Horton 02:50
Three.

M Mary Wilson 02:51
Three. And you went into engineering first - I did not know that. That's interesting because my background was in mathematics. My first career was in teaching math and then did ministry. So, we've had some similar pathways. What do you think are some of those formative experiences? Where you picked up on your call, as it were? And did you look back

in life and say, "This was shaping me and forming me for this call?"

D

Daryl Horton 03:27

Sure, good question. I think for me, most of it, I start thinking back through childhood. What's funny about it is that there are some things that I had to be told because I was too young to remember that I was even doing things. I still remember the story - my late grandmother, on my father's side, she used to tell me that in the very first church that we grew up, it was a very small church, little white building on the east side of Austin, used to tell me along with my parents, that there were moments where as a little child, I would just get up and go sit in the pulpit with the pastor. And the pastor was so gracious that he would let me sit right there with him. Or sometimes I would sit on his lap. I don't remember any of this, but they claim that that used to happen. I kind of think back and wonder if there was something that God had handed me then that I did not know.

D

Daryl Horton 04:24

I think about my involvement in churches I've got older, where it appeared that older people would always ask me to - even as a young person - to give leadership in different aspects of the church. We used to have a thing called Baptist training union. I remember the lady who was in charge of that - she made me her assistant when I was in middle school, and I was kind of like, "Why are you picking on me? What do you need me to do that for?" There were lots of introductions in the church where I was getting accustomed to and didn't know of - standing in front of the people and leading the people and teaching classes and doing those type of things.

D

Daryl Horton 04:57

I think it just came to fruition when I went to college where I actually had an experience where a gentleman that I did not know, he walked up to me on campus and tried to evangelize to me. He began asking me questions about what's the greatest problem in the world - of course, I was a sucker and I said, "World hunger," and all that other kind of stuff - come to find out, he was talking about Jesus and was asking if I knew Christ, and through the brief relationship I had with him, I was convicted that I was not living out my faith. I figured, if I was living as a Christian, he wouldn't have picked me out as somebody who needed to be evangelized. I think that was one little turning point that helped me to become more serious about my faith. And then, like I said, through school, and through the challenges. I had an undergrad not finishing and having to come back home. It just seemed like one experience after the other just confirmed until finally, I had a moment where I felt like I heard the call of God, to go into the preaching ministry. That day back in

1994, I think it was in December of '94, went before my church, and I told him that I felt the call of God on my life to preach and I wanted to formally accept it, and the road took off from there.

M

Mary Wilson 06:22

That's wonderful. You know, I'm very interested in your youth ministry. Mostly, most of the ministers I've talked to are in a senior pastor position, but I've also talked to somebody who does interim ministry and someone else who does like UT student ministry. So, I'm very interested in how your youth ministry is going during this pandemic time, and you've been doing this for 12 years at Mt. Zion in addition to your other ministerial duties, so can you just fill me in a little bit on that?

D

Daryl Horton 07:01

Sure. So, the pandemic, as you can imagine, has had its share of challenges for youth ministry, and what I think is really humorous about it is that we think about the younger generations as those who love technology, who know it, who'd like to use it, who want to do those things - but even as the churches, we've had to resort to Zoom and texts- and all that other stuff like everybody else.

D

Daryl Horton 07:26

I even noticed that our young people get to the place where they don't want to do yet another Zoom meeting - they don't want to do another virtual game night - and it's been tough. It's really been tough to try to figure out, "How do I serve them? How do I minister to them? How do I keep them connected to the church since I can't do things with them physically?"

D

Daryl Horton 07:48

What's been interesting about us is that the way our youth ministry is set up is that before COVID, once a month, our young people would lead general worship. So, the worship where the adults or the kids would sing, they would serve as ushers, they would open up the worship service, they would do the announcement. I mean, they did everything, but preach the sermon. Now that COVID has hit, we've not been able to do any of that, "How do I keep them engaged?" So, we've been working to keep them through - worship, making sure that we mentioned them and we encourage them through general worship, but then also setting aside a worship moment for them, through live stream or through Zoom. Then making sure that we still have Bible studies that keep them - but we're not

trying to do it in such a fashion that they get burnt out. Once a week is when we try to meet with them and do those things. But it's become a challenge, though, because of the assumptions that we had [about] young people lov[ing] technology, but it's still the same as adults.

M

Mary Wilson 08:46

There's still a fatigue to it. As I've talked to people, and maybe you can confirm whether you experienced this too, some folks try tried to do a lot of things at the very beginning of the pandemic - a noon prayer time or a noon chat time, like every day, well, then it was like, "Oh, that we can't do this every day, because we thought this would be over in a month."

D

Daryl Horton 09:14

That's right.

M

Mary Wilson 09:15

Yeah. So, what have you done that you've had to adjust and cut back on?

D

Daryl Horton 09:20

I guess the blessing in the - some people have said it's a silver lining through COVID - but I guess the blessing for us is that even though Mount Zion is a fairly good sized church before COVID, we were not doing live stream, we were not doing any of those remote things. So, we had a chance to start from scratch, even though we had to do it very quickly. The blessing that I think I see is that we didn't have the problem of trying to do too much because we had to figure out how to start. The cool part for us is we took it one step at a time we knew that worship service was important and that was the main thing. So, "How do we make work accessible?"

D

Daryl Horton 10:01

We got our media team together and we figured out how to turn the camera on [laughs]. So, we are out with the live stream, and then a little bit at a time - we figured out, "Hey, Zoom might be a way that we can continue our Sunday school classes." Instead of creating new things, we tried to figure out how to make our regular things accessible. We kind of had the learning curve from the other side.

M Mary Wilson 10:32
How are y'all doing now with the learning curves?

D Daryl Horton 10:38
I think we've been actually doing pretty well. Our congregation is a little senior heavy. Our senior pastor this year celebrated 50 years at our church. There are a lot of people who have grown up under him. Even with our seniors, some of them have had to learn technology, and they had to grasp on to what it means to use your phone and to see the church on the TV - all those kind of things.

D Daryl Horton 11:05
But fatigue - I don't know that we've experienced so much of that, because again, we're not offering everything we could think of - we're just trying to get the normal routine accessible. We still have several Bible studies throughout the week and people do what they were doing in person, they were picking and choosing which ones they come to. We were doing two services a Sunday before COVID. Now it's just one. I think that has also been a blessing as well, because you know - your music ministry, your media people, your ushers - because we still do the full choir and stuff, two services a Sunday. I mean, you're talking about six or seven hours a Sunday that people were being committed to doing those things. Now, it's like an hour and a half. Well, I think it's been a little bit of a reprieve for them, that we still get to do what we do, but it's not as much of a burden as it [was] in person. I don't know how many of them would admit that, but I do think that that's been nice and that's helped us to sustain because it's not, you know, it's not as much labor as it was before.

M Mary Wilson 12:15
Tell me how COVID has impacted not just the the worship service, but your congregation? Have you had individuals who've gotten ill or passed away as a result of it? How has it impacted you personally?

D Daryl Horton 12:31
COVID - when it comes to Mount Zion - I'll start there. Again, with us having a very heavy presence of seniors in our church, we knew that if and when we did reopen the church for service - there was no expectation that the majority would come back - just because of the demographics. And it was very much true. We we did a survey several

months back and we said, "Hey, we're thinking about reopening. Tell us what your thoughts are, if we reopen, would you come? What do you need to see in place?" Overwhelmingly, the majority of the congregation said, "We're fine. Don't rush. We're not coming." The numbers are still weird out there.

D

Daryl Horton 13:11

We finally did reopen in September, on a limited basis. We're probably seeing, like most churches, maybe 25% of what we would normally see on a Sunday and it's a mixture. It's not just young people, but we're seeing those persons probably in the middle age group. We're not seeing a lot of our families with children. I think a lot of that is because families are already stressed out enough about whether or not to send their kids back to school or whether to do it at home. They don't want to have just one more exposure point for their kids and I totally understand that. That's what we're seeing in worship right now. Thankfully, we have not seen very many persons who have been personally impacted by COVID. We do have members who have other relatives and other places who have been sick - thankfully, who have recovered. We've known a few people who have lost loved ones due to COVID. I would probably say - personal members who have been impacted - I'm pretty sure we could probably count on one hand, to my knowledge. I'm sure there may be members who haven't said anything, but we've been very blessed in that aspect.



Mary Wilson 13:13

That's good, keeping the exposure points down is part of that. Right. You said you started meeting in September, do you have any particular policies in place for people who are coming to the service?

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Daryl Horton 14:46

Even before COVID we have what I consider to be one of the best health ministries that you can find around with medical professionals, who make up the team. We made sure to put everything in place. Everything from wearing masks to the hand sanitizer, we're keeping people six feet apart. We're doing the temperature checks. We're asking the questions about exposure, we're doing all those things to keep everybody safe. Like I said, to the best of our knowledge, to this point, we've not had any incident.

M

Mary Wilson 15:20

That's great. I'm really glad. What kind of struggle was it to decide whether to open up, but

based on a minimal type of basis?

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Daryl Horton 15:31

I think for us, the real struggle was number one, "Would people come?" You want to make sure because you don't want to - we were doing the live stream, it was probably like most churches, it would be myself, the pastor, the musician, the media. So there's about 10 of us in the building and that's it. You're just preaching to the camera. After a while, I think our pastor came to the place where he also was really missing the connection with the people. We also felt like we were getting to a place where we had enough information where we could do it safely. That's the critical thing - is that we don't want to open the building, if we cannot do it in a degree that we felt was safe.

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Daryl Horton 16:18

Our committee met for probably two or three months before we came up with a list of activities that said, "We're going to get the building cleaned, we're going to get it sanitized, we're going to give it disinfected, we're going to do all of this. These are the procedures for people who want to come, this is how we'll make sure that in case something happen, that content tracing will be in place."

D

Daryl Horton 16:40

We went through that as thorough as we could, like I said, with our members and our connections in the healthcare field and just listening to the CDC and trying to get all that stuff in place. Again, part of that was just checking with the people to see what they desire. What I think was a blessing for us is that live stream was brand new for us. For our people, it was really cool to be able to sit at home on the couch and watch church because we've never been able to do that. I think they were really good with that. Then for those who were really concerned about the additional exposure, it was safety for them in trying to do that. That's kind of a glimpse of what we went through in trying to determine whether or not to open.

M

Mary Wilson 17:21

My mom is in her 80s and she lives in another state, but she attended services for a little bit after her church had some reopening with masks and distances and so on. Then one or two people got sick, and not necessarily from there, but then she decided, "No." She's just gonna stay home and watch whatever she could on TV. She decided that was just too much to risk. I'm glad - I'm personally glad she's taking that kind of care of herself

and making decisions about her well being. I get a sense you guys are very respectful of people that are doing the very same thing.

D

Daryl Horton 18:19

I'm sure you you've seen this and felt this as well - as a church, we have to determine, "What role does our faith truly play?" I'm sure you've seen or you know people that there are churches on each end of the spectrum. I know a church, that even through COVID, they never stopped meeting because their pastor was on one end of the spectrum that [thought], "What safer place can I be than in the house of the lord? I understand COVID, I'm not denying that it exists, but God's gonna keep us safe." And so, he never shut down. I have other colleagues on the other end of the spectrum, they still have not open. Because right there, many, many, many churches that have not opened, I don't know if it's the majority, because I don't have access to [what] everyone everybody is doing.

M

Mary Wilson 19:13

I know some churches are trying to do some things outside, but now it's gonna get colder again, so that may not be viable. When it was warmer and more comfortable this fall, I talked to several people that have done some outdoor things where they could really spread out and not be contained inside that building. But people want to meet, we're human, we're not to be meant to be isolated.

D

Daryl Horton 19:40

Yeah, you have a lot of those things. Again, you have [people] on the various spectrums, not just beliefs and ideologies, but then you also have the reality of capacity and resources. I know a lot of churches in East Austin, a lot of churches that didn't have the resources - livestream was not even an option. They don't have the equipment, they don't have the knowledge. They don't have the know how. They had to even start more from scratch than we did. You have time with cell phones trying to do Facebook Live and so you just have the full gamut of decisions that you have to make. That part for me has been the interesting part, even across culture about the decisions and how you make those.

M

Mary Wilson 20:27

Well, that brings up a dynamic that is certainly been borne out in the schools - is we have different resources. There are the haves and the have nots, so to speak, to put it and just blunt terms that applies to churches as well, and to faith communities. There are some

with more resources than others, and that's going to affect things in the long term. We're nine months into this at this point and that's hard if you can't be with your people for that long, in ways that feel connecting - I guess.

M

Mary Wilson 21:16

Well, I'm gonna shift gears here a little bit because I want to talk more about you. I am aware, of course, that you are very engaged in interfaith work in Austin and connecting people through many different types of spectrums in life and in given your history of being a native Austinite. I got a lot of questions in my mind, but let's just start with some of the interfaith work you have done and what has drawn you to that and what you have seen in the Austin Community related to the interfaith work you've done?

D

Daryl Horton 21:58

My interfaith experience began with the nonprofit organization, Interfaith Action of Central Texas - iACT - and I was introduced to that group through their executive director Simone Talma Flowers. She and I kind of had a distant relationship because we would bump into each other in different places - and then as it would be, our relationship grew stronger and she asked me if I would become a part of their of their board.

D

Daryl Horton 22:29

After some consideration, I did that. It was a really interesting experience to actually sit around the table and talk with people of different faiths in a way that I had not done before - to have that exposure to figure out how to address the things that iACT does, helping refugees who come here from other places with nothing - "How do we help them to find housing and employment? and get their kids educated?" It really wasn't about religion, but it was about helping people.

D

Daryl Horton 23:02

I think part of the eye opening moment for that is, "How do we come together as leaders, as clergy of different faiths with a common goal of helping people? And helping to strengthen our community?" As I sat around the table and did those things, and we learned how to do that together, then of course, relationships develop. I developed a really good relationship with a Jewish rabbi, Rabbi Neil Blumofe, he and I are dear friends today because of our interactions in iACT.

D

Daryl Horton 23:30

We've learned to do things together and to try to do things that build and help our community see each other and recognize each other better. We've taken these road trips over the last two summers - COVID prevented us from doing one this year - but we've documented these trips to talk, talk about our similarities, and talk about how we deal with issues in this country from our cultural and faith perspectives. I eventually became president of the board of iACT. That created a lot more visibility and a lot more responsibility for me to reach out and to have conversations with different people. I'm still on the board. I think these are my last few weeks on the board, because I think my tenure is over now - but that that's what started the interfaith dialogue for me - is going through it. I've learned a lot.

D

Daryl Horton 24:22

It's easy for us to learn about our differences in faith - about what we believe what we don't believe - those are the easy things to do. I think the challenging moments are to sit down - see that person as another person who has a faith, who has a belief, and find out what you have in common - not so that you might dismiss the differences - there are some things that I sit across the table from people with, that I just cannot let go of because of my faith and because of what I believe - but that does not mean that we can't work together for the betterment of our community. I think that's probably the biggest thing that I've learned - an appreciation for the faith of others, but also learning how to be even more confident in what I believe as well.

M

Mary Wilson 25:06

Mm hm. You may not realize this, I actually retired from congregational ministry in April right as the pandemic hit. My former congregation has done some things with iACT, like the Hands on Housing. My youth group has done some cleanup work for folks at different times, so I'm familiar with the organization. I think they do some really great work, like you said, with immigrants and refugees and especially, the Hands on Housing project - elderly people who just cannot maintain some of the things in their homes and need a little hand. If they can get that little hand they can live well independently. I think it's a wonderful organization and appreciate the work that you've done there.

D

Daryl Horton 26:11

One of the things that's also been profound and again, not trying to make this an iACT commercial or anything. One of the things I love that they do is that we did the Passport

Program where we go and visit the different congregations. That has been enlightening because there were faith traditions that I've never had the chance to sit in and view a worship service until we did that. Then to do our Red Bench conversation [The Red Bench] those have been moments where I have seen people come and sit at the table, who don't know each other, who have opposing views, and they leave the session, having made a new friend, but also having their view challenged, and able to accept and understand where their neighbor now sits. That's what I really like about the conversational part of what iACT does, because it provides an experience that most people will not go out and search for on their own.



Mary Wilson 27:11

Yeah, we hosted one of those in Cedar Park. It was very interesting. You've also done some teaching, is that correct?



Daryl Horton 27:24

Yes, we've tried.



Mary Wilson 27:28

So tell me a little bit about that.



Daryl Horton 27:31

Let's see - COVID makes everything seem so distant - early this year, in 2020 - Rabbi Blumofe and I were asked to lead a class where we walked through the Book of Exodus, both from the African American and the Jewish perspective. We did that as a class for Austin seminary. It was interesting because even though COVID had not taken place, the class was already virtual.



Mary Wilson 27:57

Oh, interesting. Okay, yeah.



Daryl Horton 27:58

So we had to learn how to do all that stuff. But it was virtual in a different way because every class that we taught, we pre-recorded it, and then put it on the seminary's website for the students to listen to it and do the research and homework. It was kind of a

precursor of what was to come. I learned so much from that because looking at the Book of Exodus and having the Jewish rabbi to talk to me about how they read it, how they feel about it, how they interpreted how they see - it was so refreshing. Especially when there were moments where we looked at the text and said, "Well, that's exactly what we do. That's exactly what we think." Also, for him to help me go deeper and look at it.

D

Daryl Horton 28:02

But then for us to talk about real stuff - to talk about racism, to talk about Jim Crow, slavery, lynchings, the Holocaust, and to gather all those things, and to look at that through the lens of the Book of Exodus - was just an amazing opportunity for me. I believe he would have to ask him if there's if he has a different thought, but I think that even through that class, our relationship grew stronger as we began to share things that don't just come up in normal conversation. But yes - that was my first official teaching experience as an adjunct professor at Austin Seminary. So it was it was quite a ride.

M

Mary Wilson 29:26

It sounds like a wonderful class. I think I would have loved to hear some of what you all had to say, for sure. That also raises a question - during the pandemic, there were a lot of protest marches for Black Lives Matter and [I'm] wondering where your congregation and where you have been with that in the middle of the pandemic?

D

Daryl Horton 29:51

I'm sure like for most people, it is a tough moment. It was interesting though, because since we're not meeting in person - then the conversations are not as fluid - because it's different if you have the George Floyd incident and then you have a church full of people that follow in Sunday morning. You know it's going to be part of the discussion. You're going to be able see people's emotions, you're going to be able to see the angst on their face. Well, because of COVID, we couldn't see that, you only get social media or emails or text messages, or whatever you do. Even as a pastor [or] preacher, we still have to address those things. You would still see our sermons addressing those issues as they happen, you would still see us trying to give leadership from the church to the people about, "How to deal with this," and, "How react," and, "How to initiate conversations."

D

Daryl Horton 30:52

We still tried to do that without that personal level of feedback. It has been interesting though because in the midst of the protests, the marching, the things on the news and the

social media - because of the connections that we've been blessed to have - the relationship that we have with the city, the police department, [the] nonprofits, and with all those places - I was able to have some very interesting conversations with people and go to [virtual] meetings, but to still have conversations about, "What does this mean, for the state of relationship in Austin? What does this mean or the City Council to make the decisions that they were having? What does this mean, for the police department to have better relationships between the community and between the police department."

D

Daryl Horton 31:40

It also opened the door for conversations among clergy. I have several clergy friends who lead predominantly white churches. This provoked us to have serious conversations that we've never had before. There were new experiences for me, where I've gone to several churches and they've done the thing that others have done, where they record our candid conversations so that their membership can hear it, so that they can see it. I think those conversations have occurred, they're not the end all of what needs to be done. But the conversations are just the beginning to get people to see other perspectives, to understand what it's like to be an African American man living in this society, living in this culture. I think the communication also has to go both ways. I think the pandemic has, in a sense, forced us to have these conversations to ask these hard questions, and to give each other the opportunity to learn.

M

Mary Wilson 32:45

Yeah, and speaking of Austin, in particular, it's one of the only large cities that is losing African American population, and yet we like to think of ourselves as so progressive, part of that is the cost of housing. Could you speak to as a native austinite, as an African American in this community, speak to how a progressive world is not so progressive sometimes.

D

Daryl Horton 33:21

Austin, like I said, is home. I love Austin unless God says something different. I don't ever see leaving because I believe that there's work for me to do here. The label that we have is the best city for people, to live in the best city for economic growth, the best city for job offers. I mean, Austin has so many labels that we have, but that label is not always true for everybody. What you start to see - again, everything stems back and we don't have time for the whole lesson - but everything stems back in Austin for the most part to 1928 when they put the city plan in place that moved all people of color east of what is now I-35. We still see the ramifications of that. But now what's happening, is the

same old story that has happened for hundreds of years, is that now that property has become more valuable, more accessible, and so the demographics are starting to change and people are being pushed, people are moving - some by choice, but some who don't have the choice.

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Daryl Horton 34:21

As we have those moments, the reality is that the city has to come to a place that if it's really going to be progressive, that it has to do intentional things to value the culture and the livelihood of all the people who live in those areas. It's not just African Americans, but it's Latinos and Latinas. It's the Asian community that's also having some issues and pushback. When you begin to see people tearing down a house that was originally built for \$50,000 and now it's being replaced by two houses that go for \$400,000 a piece, there's a problem. Those who remain can't afford the taxes, the cycle just goes on and on.

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Daryl Horton 35:04

Those are some of the things in this city - the city of Austin needs to help us and continue to help making sure that there's a thriving culture for African Americans. We notice that what happens is that people work for these tech companies, for those big names that you can imagine. As African Americans, they come here, but they don't find a thriving culture. So, they go to places where they can find it, where it's more obvious - Houston, Dallas, Atlanta - those kind of things. What I think is weird about Austin though, is that African Americans are not leaving Austin to go to Dallas. They're leaving to go to Cedar Park or to go to Round Rock or go to Pflugerville. They're still here, they're just not in the Austin area. A lot of things have to do with that - there's housing, there's also the level of education - there's so many families I talk to that don't believe that AISD meets the standards so, they go to Pflugerville or to Cedar Park for a better education, for better housing and all of that. Austin is a fantastic city, but we just have so much more to do and so much more intentional things we need to do to make sure that every culture and every person feels like this is a place of opportunity.

M

Mary Wilson 36:19

Right. I don't want to gloss over anything. I want to go back a little bit to relationships with the Austin police department. You know, I've had opportunities to hear our chief of police or to be in different meetings myself and I'm just wondering what your impressions are of the interaction you've had?

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Daryl Horton 36:48

Sure. For me, I'm grateful to have relationship not just with with the chief of police, but several members of his staff. I mean, even before he succeeded, Chief Acevedo was blessed to have some of those relationships in place. We've had some good conversations together. When there are incidents, I'm appreciative of the fact that I'm able to have phone calls, not just sit in a meeting session with 12 other people, but to have phone calls with leadership and within APD and to talk to them about my concerns - "These are the concerns of the people that I serve, these are the concerns of the community, how do we address this? How do we make this better?" So from my perspective, I believe that our police department has a long way to go, there are a lot of things that they can change that they need to work on. But because of the conversations I've had, I think I have a perspective also of the challenges they face that most of the people in the public don't get a chance to see.

D

Daryl Horton 37:50

Most people don't understand that there has always been a challenge between just the relationship between the police department and the police union. I mean, there's some issues there that people have no idea about with challenges. Again, these are not excuses for the negligent things that have happened. But I feel like I just have a wider perspective and that allows me to give some sense of grace. Because I know that the chief and others are trying to put things in place, they're trying to do things better. I think the city council is trying to do what they believe is best. Sometimes it's wording issues. Sometimes there are political moves being made just because of politics and the community gets hurt in the meanwhile. We've had some some good challenging conversations, but where I am, is that I want to continue to have relationship to help push them, and to help move them to where they need to be - as long as they're willing to make the necessary changes. I believe, and I know that I may have a more unique perspective than some people in the general public - but again, I think with that perspective, comes the responsibility of making sure that I speak on behalf of the people I serve. I speak on behalf of my family, on behalf of the culture and of course, speak on behalf of the church. But at the same time, I think it also gives me some understanding that sometimes people don't get when they read the paper or watch the news, so it kind of puts you in an interesting place.

M

Mary Wilson 39:22

Well, I want to kind of hone in on that and speaking on behalf of the church. Because you need a lot of things that are couldn't be a lot of weight of responsibility on your shoulders. But where do you see your role in speaking on behalf of the church as a minister?

D

Daryl Horton 39:43

One of the things that I did not understand - and I sort of understand it now - but I'm trying to learn every day - is that - you I were talking about our doctoral projects before we started recording - but part of what I think was really cool about my personal project was the idea of, "As an African American pastor, what does that mean, for me to be involved in civic leadership? What is the responsibility? What is the historical impact?" Part of what my research taught me is that within the African American church, it is an expectation that the pastor is involved, that the pastor speaks up on behalf of the African American community, that we are supposed to be in leadership, in the community, serving. One of the things that that I was placed in that I didn't understand the ramifications of, is that I've been serving for almost the last nine years, I've been serving on the African American Resource Advisory Commission with the City of Austin. That has given me a seat at the table within the city that I never would have envisioned. So, I have the opportunity to have communication and relationship with city council members. I currently represent the mayor on the commission.

D

Daryl Horton 41:00

Every commission that is within the city, you're appointed by a council member and you're their representative to kind of be their eyes and ears on the commission, to let them know, what are the issues, what are the concerns, but it's also for us to give feedback to them. Serving on this commission, I get a chance to hear from the community, these are the things that we have, these are the things that we need, these are the concerns, these are the problems. It's our job as a commission to relay those to the city council and to try to get action done. When I sit at the table, I don't sit there just as an African American man, but I sit there as an African American pastor and everybody at the table knows that. So, they know that that's the lens that I bring, they know that I represent the faith community when I come. I'm not naive enough to think that I can represent all African American pastors or anything like that, but I'm grateful that I've learned how to use my voice in a place where I'm not ashamed to say I'm the pastor sitting at the table. So, when I make comments, when I vote, when I do any of those things - I do come to the table as a commissioner, but also as a Black pastor. It's given me a voice that I've never imagined having.

Mary Wilson 41:14

So, is there a city council running your future?

D

Daryl Horton 42:22

I don't think so. I think politics is a little too complicated. I think as a pastor, the voice I have could be a lot stronger from the pulpit and less limited than if I were to sit on the dias. I don't believe so, but God can say, "Who knows?"

M

Mary Wilson 42:49

You just never know where that call can come from and find yourself someday. Politics is an interesting world to live in. There's a lot of different characters, and oh my goodness. I'm glad you brought up your project. I was thinking, "Whoa, we do need to talk about your project." I know we talked about it off camera first, but it fits right in to all the places that you are making an impact. Daryl, you're just being such an effective minister in the community and your church and your youth and the community at large - I mean, the interfaith community, the city of Austin and the seminary. Do you sleep any night?

D

Daryl Horton 43:48

I try. Mary, it's been really interesting because we could probably talk for the rest of the day, just talking about the interesting moments over the last five or six years that have occurred, and especially the things that I never would have anticipated. I trust God's timing all the time and I don't think the project could have come at a better moment. You remember how they taught us that the project is not about us, right? But I don't think the project could have been a better mirror for me.

M

Mary Wilson 44:31

It's not devoid of us either. We bring something to it that has drawn us to do the particular project that we've done.

D

Daryl Horton 44:41

Absolutely yeah. I think that was the cool benefit is, for the degree I did my work for the degree, but it benefited me personally to firsthand hear from other pastors to do the research, to look at the history, to do those things where I could actually see myself in, even though we couldn't write the paper and the project that way. But it's been a total blessing and an affirmation for me to do those things. I'm just grateful for all the doors that God has opened and continues to open to allow me to serve. I just tried to do the best I can in the places where I'm planted and hope that God is pleased.

M

Mary Wilson 45:26

Well, I'm looking at the time and I want to be respectful of your time, but I want to ask, is there anything that you would like to add that we didn't somehow get to or went by too quickly that you think would be good for people who might be listening to this or watching this in the future to hear from you?

D

Daryl Horton 45:47

I'm grateful for all the questions that you've asked. I think the only thing I would add is just to be mindful that the church always has a place in everything that goes on. The one thing I'm learning in this pandemic, whether it be a predominantly Black church, White church, Latino, doesn't matter what kind it is, but I do think that what this pandemic is teaching me is that it's time for the church, once again, to stand up and for the church to be united in its stance. We like to hear the cliches all the time about Sunday's being the most divided day of the week, but there have been so many conversations and relationships have been strengthened. Not just about race, but about health care, about housing - conversations that churches over the east and west divide have never had before. Relationships are being made and being strengthened among church leaders like they never have before. My hope and my prayer is that the church in Austin will continue to lead not just in the city, but in the nation - to let them know what's possible when the church comes together and fully lives out its mission. I'm hoping that that's what we'll see going into the future. The church does have a place of leadership and that we need to stand up and embrace the place that God calls us to be.

M

Mary Wilson 47:14

Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your time and and your story and all that you have shared today.

D

Daryl Horton 47:22

Well, thank you, Mary. I appreciate you reaching out to me and glad we could put it together.