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Episode Name: Unity in Christ, Not Segregation by Color
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Episode Description: A lot has changed in American society since 1954 but it’s said that Sunday at 11 o’clock is still the most segregated hour. How do we challenge this stigma? Warrensburg Church of the Brethren and Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church are working on race relations in their small town and Christian communities by building new relationships with each other.

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S5: Pastor Jerry Crouse
S6: Christy Crouse

Transcription:

Dana: Hey Dunker Punks. Thanks for hitting play on this episode. It is a great one. And I'm pretty sure you're gonna be very glad that you did. Here's a question for you to get you thinking: “When was the first time you deeply reflected on how race has shaped your life”?

[Theme music]

Dana: This episode features a conversation between Jerry Crouse, who's a pastor at the Warrensburg, Missouri, Church of the Brethren, and his daughter Christie, and Pastor Morris Collins from Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church in Warrensburg, and his daughter, Krista. The Church of the Brethren Congregation Warrensburg is white, and the Pentecostal congregation there is black. Pastor Jerry and Pastor Morris talk about the gift of their friendship, and the effects that it's had both on their own lives but also in the life of their congregations, in their community, and in their city. And I really loved listening to the honesty and humor and friendship in this conversation. So, without further ado, I'm just gonna hand it over to the Warrensburg folks.
David: Thanks for joining today's podcast, where our topic will be ‘Unity in Christ, Not Segregation by Color’. We’ll be joined by four people from Warrensburg, Missouri: two are from the Warrensburg Church of the Brethren: Pastor Jerry Crouse and his daughter, Christie, who is currently a first year law student at the University of Chicago. They'll be joined by Pastor Morris Collins of the Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church, and his daughter, Krista, who's an elementary school teacher in Warrensburg. I'm David Pierce, and I'll be serving as the moderator for today's podcast. The Church of the Brethren and the Jesus Saves Pentecostal Church engaged in a unique church swap earlier this spring, whereby Jesus Saves canceled their service and attended a Brethren service. And a few weeks later, the Brethren Church did the same and worshiped with Jesus Saves congregation. It was an exciting, meaningful, and fun experience, and more ideas or plan for the future. But it was years in the making. Let's go to the daughters, and see where all this began.

Krista: Well, first of all, I'd like to say thank you for inviting me to participate in this podcast. Um, I feel very privileged, uh to be able to participate. I, I hope that I have, uh, some very insightful questions, uh, to ask of both of you. And so, I just like to start with saying, um, I know that we're talking about diversity and inclusion. And since we're talking about unity in Christ, I'm just wondering and would like to know from each of you, um, How do you, uh, see, and how would you compare, race relations and diversity in our communities, um, with, from the fifties and sixties with, with how we interact with one another today? What do you think?

Pastor Morris: Jerry (garbled) is looking at me, for me to talk here (laughter). Uh, from the fifties and sixties? Um, I can remember as a, as a six year old, Liberty Baptist Church, came down to our little country church, uh, man out of community church. Um, it was all white church, we were an all-black church. And they came and had vacation Bible school with us. That's the first I remember it. That would have been uh, about 1953, maybe? You remember that, ya? So this was a unique experience for me. Get a chance to repeat all over again.

Pastor Jerry: And in terms of congregational life, um, I'm a little younger than Morris. (mutual laughter) I can't remember back into the 50s. This is Jerry speaking. But um, I do remember when my wife Becky and I were pastoring a congregation in Virginia, we were intentional about going to revival services for Cole's Creek Baptist Church, which was a, a black congregation. Um, and I think we perhaps, we, we'd be invited them to come share with us. But it wasn't quite the exchange like we've had here, um, and in terms of race relations, I remember growing up in St Cloud, Florida, and my buddies on the track team who were black, lived in Ashton, which was like a little suburb, a segregated suburb of St Cloud. So it's very clear that it was, there was segregation going on there, and that was in the seventies.

K: Mmhmm. Just, I was just really wondering how you all feel about the way race relations and how we relate and interact with one another has changed through the decades, because, I, I, I just have noticed, just in the 20 years that I've been a school teacher, how things have changed just within those 20 years, and I think back to, um, an occasion which I was sitting in my classroom with my students and a friend of mine came in to surprise me. She came up from behind and put her hands over my eyes, and I didn't know who it was. But when I saw her, the children saw how excited I was. And so they, one of the first questions they asked me was, “Who is that? Is that your sister?” and I thought that was so interesting because, they were very
sincere. They really truly meant that, uh, because I'm African American, she's Caucasian. And uh, they thought that that was my sister, uh, you know, because of the connection that they could tell we had. And so, I just noticed how things have changed for just, just the way seven and eight year olds view life, uh, versus how I felt like people in my generation viewed it. And so I'm just wondering, what do you all think about that? What are some of the differences that you notice? How do you think things have changed or improved? Are we getting it right today versus maybe, not always getting it right long ago?

M: I don't know. I don't know what Jerry's perspective might be. I know for me, uh, like I mentioned a while ago, the 1950’s, or a certain thing, and I remember my grandson even asked me now, “Did I get to play with white kids?” and I tell him, “No, we couldn't play with white kids”. Uh, I lived on a farm, uh, and there were, were, the population around us the population was about 10% black, 90% white. But we couldn't play with the white students and, uh, the white kids who are our neighbors. We could go to the fence and say hi, but you couldn't play.

K: Wow.

M: That started changing after they integrated the schools in 1954, and we got a chance to meet each other on different, you know, grounds, uh, such as the school and people got a chance to visit with one another and understand that, you know, we had a lot more things in common than we had differences.

K. Mmm.

M: Then it's, it progresses into the sixties and in the seventies and where we are today, you know. Ah, a lot of the younger African Americans don't remember a lot of the things the older ones just (K: mmm) went through, so their concepts are different. (K: mmm) I find that as an older African American, one of the things that has really changed is, how you value yourself.

K: Mmm.

M: Which was not necessarily true. Growing up, someone else valued you, and by that other person valuing you, you used that as the benchmark for who you were. And you had to rise above that and determine that you were someone, whether someone else defined you or not. (K: mmm) That's, that's the biggest thing that I find that’s different today.

K: Interesting.

J: And in my journey to kind of understand, so those dynamics, what you're articulating, would that be internalized racism, where it's (K: mmm) imposed on you and, the, the devaluing of oneself? Maybe because of the racism imposed on you?…

M: I think perhaps it is.

J: …by white society.
M: Yeah, I, I, I, and looking back on that, you know, there were some things going on that, you really didn't understand as being, uh it was just accepted. And then as, as we got older. I remembered 15 asking myself what was different, for me, than the, the white boys and men that I was around, other than the color of our skin. What was different that, when I was putting up hay in a hayfield, age 15 in 19, what, ‘63? Uh, my cousin and I had to set at a separate table to eat because we couldn't eat at the main table. Uh, this is ’63, and uh ’61, when was I 15 (chuckle). Uh, it would have been ‘62 to ‘63. Uh, we couldn't eat at the table with the white. That was not allowed. In fact, I was not, I was 18 years old before I could ever eat at the table with a white man. Which was interesting.

K?: Wow.


K: Wow.

M: It was my first time to get to eat at a table with a white man. You're allowed to eat at that table. Other than that, you could not do that, even if you came in downtown Warrensburg, the corner cafe used to be across of what is now the Salvation Army. You couldn't, You could go there if you went to the back door. They, you could get a hamburger, but you could not go into the main, you know, seating to have that hamburger. (J: Hmm) That was not allowed.

K: It’s unbelievable, sometimes.

M: Ya.

K: Mmhmm. And uh, you know, and, and things, that I think things have changed again, because sometimes when I'm teaching my students about that in class, they, they just look at you, wide eyed, like I can't believe that that sort of thing used to go on.

M: One of the things that (unintelligible) me in our exchange, because there are people in your congregation, some of mine, our congregation is only younger than yours. You probably saw that, uh, (J: Mmhmm) we, don't have as many people that, I don't know. You know, you seem to have people, more people in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and a lot of those people would have gone through that timeframe too. So what was nice was for us to be able to sit down, and I call it collaborate. Eat together (K: And eat) and you have a service together, because I remember a time that wasn't allowed. You just didn't do that.

J: Well, and I think what I heard from members of our congregation, the older folks, for a lot of them they were excited to have the exchange, because this was the first time in their lives. They've gone (K: Wow) to the black church and experienced this fellowship and working with you (K: M: Mmhmm) Their whole lives.

M: And see, for me, we had a little bit of that as a young person. But as a, as we got older, they didn’t do it. And so, when, when, when opportunity came for Jerry, for us to do it, why not? Let's do something different. The younger ones are more used to that. (K: Sure) I knew
the older ones would not be, um, and I'm a little uncomfortable around them, because I don't ever recall seeing you before. You know, in this context, where we went to church together. I know now I could eat at a restaurant beside you and that's okay, or we might go to other venues that are now okay. But as far as, it, it's often said that the 11 o'clock hour is the most segregated hour in America.

K: Yeah

M: But what about that? Let's, let's challenge that time and space, and see how that feels. And it felt good.

J: Mmhmm.

K: It did.

J: We did the right thing.

K: I think we all enjoyed it very much, and I, I, I see that it is one of the things that, that, that we're doing to help further, uh you know, diversity and inclusion and race relations. Um, and I'm just wondering, you know, what do you all think? And how do you feel about, um, ways other ways that we're getting it right, so to speak? What are some other things that you see in our communities and our churches that are helping further this type of this type of uh, this type of thinking?

M: This to me, one of the things, because we talked about coming to the farm for picnic.

K: Oh.

M: Now, there have been a few that have said, who, 'Will he let us fish in the lake?' (general laughter)

J: What Morris is referring to is, um, my wife, Becky, and I we, we are fortunate to live on the family farm Becky grew up on and we have a fire pit and a pond. And, uh, we've had several picnics here in the past. And we're working on this summer, this June, June 15th, to have a shared congregational picnic. Jesus Saves and Warrensburg Church the Brethren, to come out just for family fellowship time, picnic and so forth. So go ahead, Morris

M: So that'll be a different venue, too. (J: K: mmhmm) Just, little more relaxed and not at, at church necessarily. To see how that goes and to see how free and, and some, some of the younger ones have expressed a little apprehension about that. Because…

K: Really?

M: Yeah, I don't know why.

K: That's interesting.
M: Right? Yeah, but, but they, I don't know. Sometimes I feel like they felt like that, uh, uh, what do you want from me or what is it?

K: Friendship. (chuckles)

M: Well, yeah, but, but they haven't been used to on that level.

K: Right

M: He's invited me down to his house, so to speak. Hmm. We go to church together, but now that's a different, uh, challenge then. I can go to his house (surprised tone)? And uh,

K: Absolutely.

M: And you gonna let me fish? Well, we got to see, I'm gonna try that out, see how that works, you know. So that will be interesting. (J: Mmmmm) Now we've done it before because of the diversity and uh, dialogue has gone there before. But others that we've invited to come with us to that before have often expressed, you know, “Well, I don’t know, let's go. (unintelligible) Well, and they go and they come back later and they say “I enjoyed myself”, because they haven't been in that type of or now it's more than just a church service. We have to meet each other at a, on a different level. It's more social now.

J: Is not the not the structure of the church? (M: of the church)

M: who sets the structure for that. Now it's more social.

K: That’s a good point.

M: So now we have to meet on a little different, you know? So, uh, that should be interesting.

K: That should be, hmm, very interesting. And I heard you all mentioned the, uh, diversity and dialogue group. Could you all talk a little bit more about that, and how that got started? I believe both of you went on the same Kofa journey, and that kind of helped spawn, a lot of um, what we're talking about here today.

J: Um, back in 2014 (M: 2014) Yep (M: Five years ago) I had heard about the Sankofa journey when I was a member of the Mission and Ministry board of the Church of the Brethren, Wendy Chamberlin McFadden had done this, and she talked about it, and I was intrigued by it. It's put on by the Evangelical Covenant Church, um, designed to help people learn to know one another across the barrier of race. (M: mmhmm) Um, and, what you need to do is, a white person needs to find a black person to partner with for this journey.

And uh, as I prepared to go on this, I decided I wanted to do this. Um, I was trying to think of a black person that I knew in Warrensburg who might be (K: M: laughter) willing to go with me on this. I didn't know any African American people well, but I knew acquaintances.
And, of course, I knew Morris had been on the school board for a while. He's a longtime educator. I'm in education as well. He's the pastor of a church. I'm a pastor of a church. There are some similarities there, so I kind of prepared a budget and I just approached him and asked, "Would you consider doing this?" Gave him the dates and he gave it some thought. But then he said, "Ya, I think I'd like to do that."

And um, so that was quite an experience. We left on a Thursday morning and got back on a Monday night, I believe it was. Um, and this Sankofa journey took us with a group of about 40 people on a bus from Chicago to the South. We went Birmingham, uh, Montgomery, um, Jackson, Mississippi, Memphis, Tenn (M: We went to Selma) we went to Selma in Alabama, walked across the Pettus Bridge. But doing all that, Morris and I were seat mates the whole way. (M: laughter) And we spent one night in the hotel. We were in roommates, and we really got to know each other that way. When we got back, um, we decided, we got a friendship going on here.

M: What we're gonna do?

J: Go ahead, pick up from there.

M: Oh, and and we got back, and it was such a, I thought a, a challenge of our, um, you know, comfort zone, I guess, is what I would call it. I didn’t know whether I wanted to go with Jerry or not. (J: laughter) I didn’t know what the journey might be like. And, uh, I knew Jerry, I knew Becky, had Becky as a student years ago. (K: Oh wow) But, I knew Jerry and, and he’d asked me to go with him. I thought, "Well, you know what I need to challenge myself, too."

K: Right.

M: You know, I need to ask myself some questions about, you know, you can say one thing, but then to do it (K: Mmhmm) and, actually project yourself into that. That's, that's a different story. So when the time came and I, that's, that’s, it was, even though I had some trepidation about going, I, I said to him, “Ya, I’ll go”. And weather, I don’t want to (K: it was winter) (K: laughter) When I thought about that, when we sit in the ice north of Memphis, you don't go out in the weather, of course, but anyway.

K: And when you all came home in a blizzard.

M: (laughter) Came home and it was snowing. Jerry got me out of that, too. But anyway, we, when we went to, those places and I got a chance to both feel that and of course, we rode the bus and they would show us films and, and challenge us in our thoughts and feelings about being black, being white. What do you think about this and that? And then to come back and you asked, “So what we gonna do with it?” And then, I thought back on there was a dialogue one on in Warrensburg, years ago, would meet on Sunday evenings, and they called it “Race Around the Table” and in the race around the table, the job was, are the thing that they did. They sat and talked about issues. And I said, “Jerry, what if we started that again?” Because they, they did it and they let it drop and it kind of fell by the wayside. Let, let's come back and let's do something in Warrensburg, that kind of centers around that same idea and, and that, that's how this came
about. And then, diversity and dialogue became in the thing that we wanted to try. It was around the time of the, uh, incident with the Ferguson.

K: Might burn...

M: Remember that? That's when that was happening, when our first discussion was about that.

J: Right

K: Wow

M: And we, we talked about, We invited a number of people in the community we thought might wanna take part in that, and that has since, uh, ebbed and flowed some. Some have come and gone, some of new ones have come in, to be a part of that group.

J: The Morris and I host that, it's once a month, the second Thursday of the month from 7 to 8 p.m. So it's not a long experience, but the goal is to foster relationships amongst (M: Yes) ourselves and the community. (K: mmhmm)

M: And has gone on that two of us from that group have gone on to the City Council and become a part of the diversity and inclusion, which was kind of a resurrection of…

J: Diversity and Inclusion Commission.

M: Mmhmm. Commission. Right? That's, that's where they came from. And uh, to kind of again look at what's going on in our community. And what can we do to, to uh, the proactive instead of reactive (K: Exactly) in race relations that go on in the community? Yeah. Jerry got me into that.

K: (laughter) Well, I think it's been very awesome that both of you stepped out and took a chance and decided to, to further your own growth. (M: mmhmm) And then also, I think that it's great that you've brought it back to the community and then, you know, (M: Ya) encouraged more of us to become involved as well, as I appreciate being a part of the diversity and dialogue.

M: Yes

K: I remember when you started it. At first I wasn't a part. I just recently come on board about a year ago. (M: mmhmm) So I, you know, I feel like I've experienced a lot of growth as well, and I, I appreciate and admire both of you for helping further things in a forward direction. As far as race relations and diversity in the community goes.

David: Okay, can we listen to Christy, some of her questions, then?

Christy: I think that many people don't necessarily take time to think how their life has been shaped by their race, uh, especially white men your age, I think, a lot of times never have
deeply reflected on how their life has been shaped by their race. So my question for you is when was the first time, that you deeply reflected on how race has shaped your life, and moreso, why? Why did you decide to do that or what, what spurred that, reflection?

J: Okay, maybe I'll respond to your second question first. Um, why? I remember my late fifties sitting on our idyllic farm here south of Warrensburg, and just realizing how disconnected I felt from the American Black experience. I just didn't feel like I got it, at all, and didn't feel that that was, that I wanted to live the rest of my life that way. I felt like I was missing something, and I like we mentioned earlier in the interview, we, we, I’d heard of the Sankofa journey and I thought, well, that would be an opportunity to work at this some. So that's why. I wanted to better understand, um, the whole concept of race, but specifically the black experience. And then, um, “when did I first deeply reflect on race?”, quite honestly, the Sankofa journey was the first time in my life (K: Mmm) when I have, when I began reflecting deeply on race, and I remember an opening ac, activity. We all went around the circle there. The group, we'd only been there about half an hour. We were asked to share. “Um, how would you describe your race?” And when it came to me, I said, “Well, I guess I'm White”. I don't think I'd ever really thought of myself as White, and that's White privilege, now that I think about. But that began my, my deep reflection which has continued, and I continue to work at that, intentionally.

C: Another question I have, uh, also has to do with your and Morris's friendship. I think your friendship is very unique and to me, it seems very, intentional, and, and, many good things have come to our community through your… partnership and your friendship together. What have been some surprises for you in your friendship, or that some surprises that have come from your friendship together, for you?

J: Um, I agree. I think I consider my friendship with Morris to be a gift. And, well, I guess one of the surprises, is through, as we've learned to know one another, I realize we have a lot of the same values. Um, I, I think we both seek to live our lives to follow Jesus. I think we both are deeply committed to the church. I think we both love our families, and are deeply committed to our families and to our community. We're both educators, um, so a lot of things in common that it just, just feels right to, to be friends. I, I trust Morris. He's a graceful man. Um, he's wise. Um, he's got a sense of humor. He probably put up with a lot of things for me that I don't realize he's putting up with. (laughter) But um, it seems very genuine in our friendship, and one of the surprises was this worship exchange.

We hadn't planned that. But again, when a relationship is happening, you never know what the future holds, except you're in a relationship with each other and Morris suggested this last fall and said, I think it's time we did this. I brought it to our congregation. They were enthusiastic, and, we're moving right along.

K: Mmhmm.

J: What do you think, Morris?

M: I, I you know (difficult to understand)? And I'm thinking about, you know, uh, Christie asked that question, and so, and, you know, when did you first realize it was? And I think I first realized that, you know, there was a connect, when you told me about your, uh,
experience. A lot of people don't know you. You grew up as a little boy in Ecuador (J: Mmhm) I think. And, uh, and then you spent time in the Dominican Republic (J: Mmhmm). And so yeah, and so to me, being black was not just the color of your skin, it was having experiences, that dealt with diversity and dealt with different aspects of people of color. And you had experienced a lot of that already. And so, it was, he, he didn't offer me a song and dance, kind of, of what I had been used to as, as a White man, Black man relationship. You just accepted me for who I am. And, it didn't make any difference, you know. He'd make any input, any value judgments on, on it. Uh, you are who you are, I am who I am. And I immediately picked up on that. First, I saw that.

I, and, I thought, I said, “You know, this guy's for real,” you know? And then when I was ill in the hospital, back in January of 2018 and here he is always say that, he's sitting across the, the room looking at me. I say “You know, how many people would go to that extreme?”, you know? I know a lot of black friends that didn’t do that. Not because they couldn't, or maybe wouldn't, they just didn’t. And he did. And he was, and I thought, Wow, you know, you didn’t have to do all that. But here he comes, and he’s sitting across from, he's a real friend.

K: Right. A friend’s just…

M: and I learned to love him as we rode up and down that highway from Chicago, (laugh) to Jackson, Mississippi, and back to the, in Pettus Bridge. And, and we went on and I tell him, “You know, love is, is, is, is more than just a four letter word, you know”. It, it (K: Absolute…) expresses itself in the things that you, that you share with others and so forth. And I, and I saw that happening. Yeah, yeah.

C: All right. My next question, is something that I can relate to right now. I'm, 24, and, life changes a lot in your twenties, and you change a lot in your twenties and I've really noticed how, um, especially since, for example high school or even college, I've, gotten to have new beliefs and, and new values. And have changed my perspective on many issues, and, it's been an interesting ride, and I think that happens to a lot of people in their twenties. Um, something interesting for me, and I think I've noticed this, is that, I think both my parents, but especially you, have maybe changed in the past, probably five, eight years and maybe even changed a lot. Um, so my question for you is, if things have changed, what are some of those things? But more importantly, what is it like? To, um, be in your fifties, sixties and have cognitive dissonance, or have challenges to deeply held beliefs that, that, you've had, had all your life up until now. And how have you dealt with those changes?

J: Well, one of the things I think I've learned is that cognitive dissonance, that tension, means I'm still alive (laugh), and I'm still growing, and I hope that I'll continue to have that the rest of my life. Um, specifically, a couple things do come to my mind. I came through the Counselor Education program here at University of Central Missouri a little bit later in life, in my fifties and uh, preparing to be a high school counselor where I serve now. And it was at a time in my life where I did examine a lot of things, especially in light of my years as a leader in the church. And I can, I think, list four specific things that have, been an impetus to growth for me. And one of the things I learned was that as a counselor, I want to avoid judging anyone, because when I judge somebody that puts them on the defensive, it will no longer be a, a therapeutic process for them as their counselor if they feel judged by me. And then I thought that
through and remember that Jesus taught us, not to judge anyone, (K: Mmhmm) uh, less we be judged, and, and you think about it, sometimes the church is the most judgmental place on the planet (K: Mmhmm), and so I've realized that that's a learning I could definitely take also into my leadership in the church. So not to judge others has been huge.

Another one, um, as a counselor, we need to be careful to not impose our values on others. And uh, sometimes I think again in the church, we think that we need to go out and convert people and impose our values on them. And I think it's more of a delicate experience. Uh, if we look at the way Jesus lived his life and taught his teachings, I don't think he meant for us to force ourselves or our values on anybody (K: Mmhmm). In fact, we're not really respecting someone when we do, and so to learn, uh, the dynamics of not forcing my values on others has been a really important growth area for me. Another one has been the importance of, “If I'm in doubt it all, don't say anything. Just listen.” (K: That’s good) Listening is really important, and not enough people I think are available to listen to us. And then the other one, which reinforced my, my understanding of Jesus called to us was as a counselor, to always hold my client with unconditional positive regard, and Jesus talks about unconditional love. Uh, so those four things have really been, um, an affirmation for me, but also growth for me. And whenever this cog, cognitive dissonance there's that tension between beliefs, I've come to find that that's an invitation to grow, and the spirit has something waiting for me. If I will wait into that dissonance and see what the spirit has to teach me,

David: Well, we've about come to the end of the program. Morris and Jerry, any closing comments, anything that you'd like to say about, uh, the relationship that you've had? Some of the exciting things we’re planning in Warrensburg and with the churches working together?

M: I just, as I mentioned to Jerry, when we had our, when ya'll came over to visit with us, at uh, Jesus Saves, we gotta do this again. (K: Mmhmm) And uh, I, I enjoyed that. I know the members did. They were very, uh, you know, appreciative of you coming. For many of them, it was a new experience, a new challenge, a new kind of way to uh, learn to appreciate, because even though it sometimes looks like is White privilege, we sometimes in the Black community, feel privileged too, or like, “You owe me something”, and I think you earned everything that you have. At least that's the way I was taught, by my dad, is that you don't expect anyone to give you anything. You earn that. And so, I would like to earn, uh, the respect of my friends and the people that we've, you know, congregate with, and I felt like that, that has happened at the Church of the Brethren. So I've been very, uh, impressed with the time that we spent together. And uh, I think the people that are attracted to even the diversity and dialogue have expressed some thought to their, uh, that uh, lead me to believe that's been a good thing. It has been a good thing.

J: I'll say Amen to that, too. I think relate, it's all about relationships, and we've been gifted with (K: Yes) um, a genuine relationship, (M: Yep) and, that has ripple effects. (M: Mmhmm, it does) And we're experiencing that and sharing that as a community.

M: I believe that.

[Background music starts]
David: Well, I'd like to thank Morris and Krista Collins and Jerry and Christy Crouse for joining us in this important discussion. ‘Unity and Christ, Not Segregation By Color.’ As Gandhi said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” I'm David Pierce. Thanks for listening.

Dana: So, Dunker Punks. When was the first time you deeply reflected on how race has shaped your life? When was the most recent time you did any of that kind of reflecting? For some of us, especially those of us who don't identify as White in America, that kind of reflection is ever present and unavoidable. But for others of us, those of us who, for instance, grew up as White people in American culture, where whiteness is falsely considered the norm, we may have never had to think about how race affects us. I really appreciate the way that Pastor Morris and Pastor Jerry talk about their friendship. Couldn't you just hear in their conversation, how much they like one another and respect each other and love each other?

They talk about their relationship as a gift, which is beautiful, but they're also not a greater being honest about the hard and awkward parts of a friendship that crosses what W. E. B. Du Bois called “the color line”. Pastor Morris says that he wasn't really sure he wanted to go with Jerry on that Sankofa journey five years ago, and he says that the young people in his church are uncomfortable even now, showing up at pastor Jerry's house, that being in church is one thing, but going to somebody's house. That's different.

And Pastor Jerry talked about how he had never before even thought about how his life was shaped by his whiteness, and how doing that work was awkward and uncomfortable, and how some of the older people in his church hadn't even stepped foot into a Black church before. Conversations around racism and White supremacy in America are messy and awkward and heartbreaking.

Talking about the realities of race is not easy, and it's not safe. But it is necessary if we want to be followers of Jesus in America today, to start talking and to commit ourselves to the opportunities and responsibilities and relationships that are gifted to us when we do. My prayer for you, Dunker Punks, and for us all, really, is that we would find the courage and the compassion and the faith to step into those awkward moments, to trust that the call and the promise of unity in Christ is real, and that even when it's embarrassing or difficult or upsetting, even when what were called to do, feels like it might be breaking a major social rule or definitely going to get us in trouble, that we could remember that our allegiance is to Jesus. The one in whom there exists no divisions. From whom there is no female or male no slave nor free, no Jew or Gentile. No Black nor White.

Next up for the DPP is a special summer broadcast, y'all. This is the last episode before we start a new season and a new series format. Over this summer of 2019 we're gonna repost one of our favorite existing series. Favorite, as voted by you in our recent DPP survey. It's a four part series, and so you'll get one episode every three weeks. That's June 29th, July 20th, August 10th, and August 31st. So don't be scared when you don't see the next episode downloading into your feed immediately this summer, they're coming. And then we'll return with all new episodes in the fall every other week, just like we've always been, starting September 14th.

The Dunker Punks podcast is a network of radical Jesus followers. This week's episode was created by the Warrensburg Church of the Brethren, and edited by Jacob Crouse. I'm your host, Dana Cassel. Zach Hauser is our production intern, and Kerrick van Asselt produces graphics for all the socials. We’re grateful to the Arlington Church of the Brethren for creating space and hosting all the podcast goings on, and especially to Suzanne Lay, who keeps all of us on the same page. You can learn more: find the archives of the show at Arlingtoncob.org/dpp. If
you would like to get involved we’d love to have you, you can find us on social media at Dunker Punks Pod or email us at dpp@arlingtoncob.org. Be well, Dunker Punks, and wade out there into all the awkward.