

# Interview with Shannon Hopkins

## February 17, 2022 episode

**Blair:** [00:00:00] You're listening to igniting imagination, a podcast to spark the spirit within you from Wesleyan Investive and Texas Methodist foundation. This season, we are igniting the imagination of leaders through purposeful life-giving conversations about the five muscles the body of Christ must strengthen to be fit agile and ready for God's.

For more information about the five muscles visit [tmf-fdn.org](http://tmf-fdn.org) and click leadership ministry.

**Lisa:** Hi friends. Welcome to a new season of igniting imagination. If you are new to our podcast. My name is Lisa Greenwood, and I am vice president of leadership ministry for the Texas Methodist foundation and Wesleyan investive. And this season I am joined again by my colleagues, Blair Thompson, white and Scott Sharp.

Hey you two. Hi Lisa. Hello. It's great to be together again,

since this is the start of a new season. We want to spend a few minutes talking about the theme for this season. Wait [00:01:00] for it the same as our last season. That's right. We're continuing to explore the five adaptive muscles that we've been talking about for a few months now, because what we're hearing from you as listeners is that these conversations are deeply resonating with you and with your leadership.

That they're giving you language for what you are already experiencing in your context and exactly the places where you want to go. So when we share the five muscles with congregations and conferences, we're hearing keep talking about this. This is our work, right. So, let me go back and give just a quick recap of how we identified these five muscles.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we gathered church leaders from across the country, bishops pastors, innovators, lady, and did a lot of listening about what they were observing and learning. And five clear themes emerged for what the church needs to be doing right now. And this is how we say it in order to be fit agile and ready for God's.

[00:02:00] Now, here are the five. Grieving. Well, discerning purpose, walking alongside distributing power and expanding imagination. If you haven't listened to the first podcast of the last season that talks about each of these, I hope you will. They're all really connected to each other. Anyway, what we continue to hear from you is that each muscle is still so relevant.

They speak to exactly the work that church is called to do right now in this season. So we're pledging to you to give you resources, to explore these muscles. We're having conversations with amazing leaders on this podcast. We're asking folks to share their insights and stories through blogs, which we'll be sharing with you soon.

And we want to hear from you what's resonating. What is challenging you and where are you seeing these muscles being exercised in powerful ways. Check out the show notes for how to contact us and let's grow together. As we've explored these muscles, we've [00:03:00] realized pretty quickly that we need multiple voices and perspectives.

Speaking into this one. It's like if you went to the same exercise class with the same trainer again and again, it's a good workout, but mixing it up, taking a different class with a different trainer helps you strengthen different muscles in new ways. So you exercise your muscles in ways you hadn't before.

And that can be a really good thing. So we're going to continue to invite people, to share their ideas and experiences around these muscles so that we, as the body of Christ can be fit for God's work in this world in this season.

**Lisa:** with that Blair and Scott, we keep returning to this muscle metaphor.

Cause it's been a really helpful image. I'm wondering if either of you has a story about muscles that can maybe help us engage with this metaphor and.

**Scott:** Well, I can share a story that does a little humbling, but I think that's a good thing because muscles are always in the need of being trained. So at the, uh, at the beginning of December, I [00:04:00] did a triathlon out in California and it was a half Ironman distance.

I mean, it's a fairly decent sized race. It's a mile swim and 56 mile bike and a 13 mile run. And, and people have asked me how I did. And I said, well, I got the race that I trained for. And then they're like, oh, exciting. I was like, yeah, I got the race I trained for, but that was not the race I was in. So yeah.

You know, I w I really struggled in the bike leg, which was unfortunate and really disappointing, but it was funny how often I've thought of this muscle metaphor as I was doing that. Like, you know, because there were parts of me that really wanted to push, and I do that. I mean, I had a long race and so, you know, There is that perspective of, of just doing what you can and not blowing things up in any given moment.

And so, as we talked about all these different muscles and, you know, there's a part of me that just wants to explore all of them altogether [00:05:00] all at once. And I think that the way that we're doing the podcast really makes a lot of sense so that we can listen to one, listen to another and then sort of getting into it.

**Lisa:** I love that I got the race I trained for, but it was not the race. That was that. So, and, and, and what a great word for us in the church, right. Where we're getting the results that we're working towards.

Ouch. Right. But you just got to keep moving.

**Blair:** Yeah. And I, the other thing that's really resonating with me from your story, Scott and I, I think we should put this in the show notes too.

Is Lisa your monograph on the mixed ecology that really paints a picture of. What we are experiencing, certainly within the United States of the ecology of church. And it's no longer what it used, you know, it used to be, it used to be very congregational centric and now it's, so I feel like, you know, related to your metaphor, congregations, are we, we know how to, how to run the race from [00:06:00] 1965.

Uh, you know, and, and it's not, that's not the race we're in right now. And so I, I think we have to be very aware. And have the language for, in your case, Lisa, the Mixed Ecology, could you talk a little bit about that? I know we hadn't planned on that, but it just feels really relevant so that we understand what race we're in right now.

**Lisa:** So in a culture that we all know and are seeing the statistics around this in a culture where more and more people are choosing not to affiliate. With churches or any other membership-based organization. Right. So affiliation is declining. We are still putting all our eggs in the basket of the attractional model church that, that we inherited.

Right. And what we're seeing is. That there's actually a more mixed ecology, which is the word we use. That includes a lot of other models for gathering and for pursuing belonging and meaning making and, um, and [00:07:00] relationship with God and with each other. And that looks like I'm only, we're seeing it all around, right?

It's it's coffee shops and laundromats and online communities and really missionally focused community churches. And. Gatherings and you get the idea, right? It's this mixed ecology of what it looks like to be the body of Christ today. And, um, if we, there are a number of churches that are going to continue to thrive as attractional model churches, of course, and we need them.

Um, but, but increasingly we need to be thinking about what it looks like to be the church in that more mixed ecology, right. Yeah, which means exercising some different muscles than maybe we were originally trained in. Thanks for bringing that up. Blair. I think that's an important part of the picture I do.

**Lisa:** Well, it's actually a great segue into this interview because. The person that we're interviewing today, [00:08:00] Shannon Hopkins has actually been a real friend and mentor in this arena of what it looks like to think about the mixed ecology. And, and we invited her into this conversation about grieving.

Well, because she really has helped her organization makes them. And when you make a pivot, you have to let go. And, and we'll talk more about that, but let me tell you a little bit about Shannon. So she is a co-founder and the lead cultivator for rooted good. A non-profit that empowers institutions, social enterprises, and entrepreneurs to create systemic change and native Texan in 2004, Shannon moved to London and founded the nonprofit Patricia House.

Now she had been a church planter in Texas, but she moved to London because she could tell that she actually just went to visit. And then she stayed for 15 plus years. Right. She went because she knew that the UK was ahead of us in the U S on this [00:09:00] whole notion of declining affiliation and such, and she thought she could get some ideas on what she, and she just fell in love with the innovation and things that were happening.

So in 2020 Matryoshka house, That had been around for 16 years, actually went through all this discernment work and she'll talk about that. And they became three organizations, including the US-based rooted. Good. Now Shannon has launched or influence the formation of 15 campaigns, projects and organizations and trained over 200 social entrepreneurs.

In 2008, she was awarded the woman of the UN award and UK's annual woman of peace award for the campaign called. The truth. Isn't sexy. That addressed demand side of human trafficking. Shannon, I think is a born connector. She has really connected innovators and on the edges of the church and folks in the center of the [00:10:00] church, she is a person of deep faith and influence.

Um, I am so excited for you all to get to meet her through this interview. Blair, you've done both interviews so far about grieving. Well, the first was Suzanne Steele and now this one was Shannon. So I'm curious about some observations that you're having about these two different conversations about grief.

**Blair:** Yeah. So I think both the first conversation was Suzanne Stabile and this one was Shannon Hopkins. They both. Certainly recognize this. The fact that grief is very center to their work, even though like from the outside, you wouldn't look at it and go, oh, well, they must really be involved with grief.

This is certainly the greatest piece that's connected to purpose and connected to imagination for both of them. And I think that's a really important takeaway for me is that as we've said over and over again, these muscles are all of. And, um, and grief we've also said that they, you know, it's [00:11:00] not a one and done thing, and that's certainly both of, uh, of these, you know, amazing leaders and entrepreneurs in their own.

Right. They recognize that it's an ongoing process that even in the midst of their continuing, uh, expanding imagination, that they're, they're revisiting grief to check in and to see, you know, where it's showing up for them. And so a couple of things with Shannon specifically that really stood out to me as I was talking to her.

And I obviously, when. So that to you all, but, but a big one is that that grief is tied to identity. And by that, I mean, this idea of, well, this is what we thought we would be, who we would be and what we would be doing this. We thought this was going to be our identity and it's not. It, it turns out that it's, it's taken a different direction and we need to grieve that sense of loss.

That we're not who we thought we would be, and we're not doing what we thought we would be doing. So it's almost this failure. There's a, she said, I think, uh, something about it, it's a failure to meet expectations, your own expectations and other people's. And there's grief in that. And I think [00:12:00] acknowledging it, taking time to sit with it.

Um, both of these leaders talked about having ritual associates. With grief. So, uh, these themes that keep coming up, I mean, it just reminds me that we have to be so present to our feelings. And, uh, and the last thing I'll say about Shannon is just how present she is to her feelings, which is an inspiration to me.

And she refers to that, you know, has so many of us, as leaders can just move on to doing and to actually make a decision, to sit with the feelings and then allow for space for others to do that. I mean, that is. That's really what paves the way for, for deep learning self-learning and also for, for deep imagination, again, it's all connected.

So, um, so I'm very inspired by, by Shannon. I can't wait for folks to hear her and really get to know her cause she's a really remarkable leader. So

**Lisa:** you've named one of the things that really. To me from both of these interviews and conversations is the importance of creating space and time to grieve, to slow [00:13:00] down, give ourselves the time and space because otherwise we're quite likely not to.

And just to. Shove it aside or put it away or not give ourselves permission. And so both of them really talked about the, the value of slowing down and this is where the rituals come in and, and those sorts of things, Scott, what, what stood out to you as you listen? Yeah.

**Scott:** You know, the thing that really hit me was the actual way in which she told her stories of.

Like it was a narrative process of talking about it. And so when I thought about her conversations about the need for ritual, she was demonstrating that through the ritual of storytelling. And I, and again, when you slow down and you have somebody who can serve as a conversation partner about what your life is relative to what you've experienced in grief.

I mean, I think that's just one of those rituals that everybody can do. [00:14:00] It's not, it's not highly religious, it's not highly systemized. It's just the very nature of telling a story. And so I really appreciate the way that she did that. Very authentically and transparently about a number of different

**Lisa:** things in her life.

That's lovely. Ah, such a good lead in, into Shannon's conversation with Blair. Let's listen...

**Blair:** we're here with Shannon Hopkins. Hi Shannon. I'm so glad you're here today.

**Hopkins:** Hi Blair. It's great to be with you.

**Blair:** We're talking about grief and grieving. Well, and so I'm wondering if a good place to start is for you to just share your story and tell the story of Matryoshka house and now rooted good two organizations that you have, uh, have led are leading with some attention to our lens of grieving.

Well,

**Hopkins:** thanks, Blair. Yeah, I'd love to, it's interesting. You know, [00:15:00] grieving. Well, Talking about grief. Isn't like this really happy, joyful subject, but it's one I'm become really familiar with the last couple of years. And I'm learning that it's the practice of grieving well, which is probably informing my leadership.

More than anything. And I, yeah, and I feel like I'm just learning a lot from the practice of grieving. Well, so you asked me to talk about matryoshka house and rooted good, which are two organizations that I've been part of starting. Patricia House really in so many ways emerged, but was an organization that I founded in 2004 after I moved to the UK.

So I'm based in London, but I'm from Texas and having had a career in business and then. Working as a church planter in Texas, I found I was in need of a context that would help me [00:16:00] experiment my way into the future of what it meant to be church and what it meant to build Christian community. And so I'm Patricia House really was.

The manifestation of that, of all the questions I was asking back in the early two thousands, what does it look like to be church? What does it look like to do the good work of the gospel in our context? What does it mean to find new economic models? And so for 15 years I led matryoshka house. It was parked community.

We grew a missional community out of 15 projects that we launched. We launched social enterprises, social justice projects. We campaigned on against the demand side of human trafficking and change legislation. We worked with women that were homeless, teaching them to repurpose jewelry. We developed tools, including tools for measuring your impact.

It was just this really prolific. Organization. That [00:17:00] was so many things to me and really changed my life and helped me work out my faith in new ways and had a lot of success. We were growing. We really were pioneering in both the U S and the UK. And from the outside, it looked like nothing could stop us in a lot of ways.

Right? Like it, we were doing the work we wanted to do, but over time, We realized that we were working harder and harder and harder, and it wasn't feeling very resilient. And so in 2017, we. Um, we met with a lot of consultants, to be honest. And everyone kept saying, you guys are all entrepreneurs, you're all creatives.

You really need to like find a managing partner. And so we went through the process of what would it look like to have someone come in and help us like go to the next level and to build for sustainability. [00:18:00] And that process. So we, we did bring someone on and we started this long process of what was, what did the work need to be now that it wasn't emerging anymore?

In some ways that it had emerged and interesting, it was through going through that process that we realized we had to take it apart. And that the work really wasn't sustainable. We realized we had like six business models going on. We were operating in two countries, we had nine people on payroll. It was just a lot and we needed to.

Yeah, we just needed to take it apart and find the distinctive through thread. And at the beginning we still thought we were going to build for it to all exist together. The work in the U S and the UK, but through a series of events, we took it apart and we took all of the work and spun it into three new [00:19:00] entities, two in the UK, and one in the U S which became rooted.

Good. And. You know, we did this at the end of 2019. It was all official to the missional community, to our partners globally. And we did this amazing ceremony and we launched, and I was so excited because. The work in the U S became very defined and clear, and it was geographically bound and it's like, okay, now we can run.

We can focus. We can have a team that focuses on the work in the U S and the. Around impact measurement in the impact investing sector, it was really clear the team that was most passionate about that work in the UK could run. They could give sole attention to that work and the same, the work supporting people on the ground in the UK to launch ventures, which became good makers society.

It could just focus and do that work. [00:20:00] And. I'm a three on the Enneagram. So there's a way to tell this story that looks and sounds really successful and it is partly, but the other part was we let something die. Like what matryoshka house was no longer exist. And. You know, that happened just before the pandemic, but it w it was amazing.

He sitting in the pandemic happened, Rudy, good, launched good makers launch. The TEI became the curiosity society. And everyone had runway. Everyone had security, but I was faced with what I just ate. I just let go. This thing that I felt like was my life worked. And so. The beginning of the pandemic really was one of grief and loss for me.

As well as celebration and success, like for the first time in 16 years, I didn't wake up every morning thinking how are we going to [00:21:00] fund the work? And is everyone going to be okay? Everyone was safe. Everyone was secure. Everyone was doing the work they were called to do, but I don't know for me, it was also a season of grief.

Anyway, that's a really long answer and talks much more about Matriciana house, but I think. One thing that I've come to really ponder. And I don't know if it's where we are in history or being American is why we focus so much on everything has to grow. Every, everything has to grow. Everything has to stay alive when.

As Christians, we, we believe in a gospel of death and resurrection. So I feel like we need to figure out how to get better at letting things end. Well,

**Blair:** I really appreciate just your, your sharing through that lens of, of grief, because I know that, um, well, what you're reminding me of just now is, is the idea for a reason for a season.

And it sounds like what you did together at Patricia House. [00:22:00] Discerned that that particular season was over and that it was time for a new season. And, um, so I just wonder if, if you could talk a little bit about how purpose and focusing on purpose is, is tied in with that discovery of seasonality of, of needing to grieve and then needing to move on.

So to share with me about how purpose plays into this,

**Hopkins:** it's a great question. I think that what we couldn't have done the work to let go without going back to purpose. So I would say that I think the interesting thing, you know, I actually feel sorry for the person that like led us

through the process at times, because, you know, he forced us to slow down and to go back to why were we doing all the things we were doing and where the things that we were doing actually achieving.

The impact we wanted to have, there was a lot of good happening and we could have [00:23:00] just kept going. And again, that's the bit about you can look really busy and really active and really impactful, but is it really the good that you exist to do is another question. Right? And so I think by paying attention to purpose, It then you can, you can go, okay, well, how do we fulfill our purpose and what do we need to stop doing in order to start doing the things we really.

To you and need to do in this moment.

**Blair:** I so appreciate that. And the other piece of it, and you've written about this, and I'm specifically referring to the article that you wrote for faith in leadership. I think in the middle of 20, 20, sometime in the summer. And we'll put it in our show notes for folks to take a look at it, but you talk about pivoting as an organization.

And that's what I mean, that's what you've been sharing so far. And, but it was so striking to me that I think it was the second stage. Grief, like you write a whole thing about, you've [00:24:00] got to have time to grieve. And so I just wonder about how you would, like, what would you recommend for people that are in the midst of a pivot and recognize the need to grieve?

How. How do you do that as an organization or as a leader of an organization?

**Hopkins:** Well, I think the first thing you have to do is you have to stop and so you have to slow down and you have to stop. So, you know, Andy root talks a lot about how, even the focus on innovation and doing all these new things. It's making us move too fast.

It's AXA. Everything's accelerating. We're all about the new, but actually we have to pause. We have to stop. We have to slow down and I don't, you can't do grief if you don't do that. You can't. Right. So I don't know. I think that's the first thing. And I think leaders have to hold the nerves. Right. Like, I think as leaders, you have to hold the nerve to go slower, right?

To pause, to stop. The other thing [00:25:00] I've been thinking about a little bit this morning, a years, I haven't thought about this book in a long time, but in preparation for today, I was thinking about Lauren winner's book, mud house Sabbath. Have you read this? I

**Blair:** have a

**Hopkins:** long time ago. So for people that haven't, this is a book and it's a, it's basically a spiritual practices book.

She talks about practices that are both Christian and Jewish, but quite frankly, Jews do them better. That's what she says. And one of the chapters in there is about morning. And I was thinking about how, when we really do grief work, we actually need ritual to help us do grief work. So, you know, I remember when my father died, you know, I was so grateful.

Like the pastor of the church and the funeral home, because they help you like do the grief work. Right. They give you some rituals, they lead you through a process. And I think, I think one of the things [00:26:00] that surprised me is I knew. At the end. I knew when we were making these decisions with Patricia House in the last few months, it was hard work.

I talk about it as the hardest work I've ever done in my life. I think some of that's because I'm a three, I really was struggling, but I felt like I had to help everyone go through the process. So a lot of people around me, a lot of people in the community were feeling the loss and I didn't feel it till later.

In a lot of ways, but I think we ha we gave people, we created rituals to help people pay attention to what was happening. And so I think you have to stop, you have to reflect, and then I think you have to do some of those practices that help us find resonance in that moment. Right. That help us do the spiritual work.

I just, I don't know, again, I don't know if I'm [00:27:00] really hitting the nail on the head. I think. I think the other thing is if we do that, if we pay attention and we, we do some of that work, it, it gives us hope for the resurrection part, right? It's Nate Stucky. Who's at the farm and airy. I was with him once when he did an activity where he made people, put their ideas in a compost pile.

Like the ideas that they were letting go of that they knew were not for now, because they would come back with a sense I'd come back in another time. Right? That's another way of doing grief work. And I do wonder if this is one of the most unique opportunities in history, maybe not history, but maybe in the last 50 years for the church.

Both as our own organizations are needing to go through renewal. Some of them need to die. Some of them need [00:28:00] to find a new way forward.

Right. But also we're experiencing death culturally in society, not just, there's been a physical, large physical loss of life through COVID, but also a lot of. You know, depth of the way society is structured, right?

Even like the ways of working are changing. But the, I think this is a time when society needs ritual and can we find some ways to help people do the grief work anyway, I don't know. I could go on and on about this,

**Blair:** but oh, I think you're so right. The place of ritual is just so important and it feels like, I think your observation is right on that people are so hungry.

For, for leadership in that way, uh, lead us through grief, even though we may not want to go there kind of thing, which is hear you saying that even you personally, even though you weren't feeling the feelings of grief, you still had the discipline to sit with [00:29:00] it and to invite people, to sit with the feelings.

Gosh, I mean that, so it's, it's interesting. How, how grieving is it can be especially corporately. An invitation to a ritual or to a discipline. And I mean that like a spiritual discipline

**Hopkins:** of grief. Well, yeah, I don't know. I think it's interesting. So one of the things that surprised me when, again, when my dad died, I haven't thought about this in a long time is how tired I was.

And I kept hearing everyone go, grief makes you really tired and. And I, I T I wonder if it's like, that's part of like, why you have to slow down to do some of the work of grief. Like, anyway, I don't know. I feel like I've got a multi, a few little thoughts to go with that, but I think if we. If we don't do the work of grief, it will come out another way.

And I think whether that leads us to toxic [00:30:00] unhealthy organizations and communities, we don't need more of that. Right. If it damages our interpersonal relationships, right. We, if we don't do the grief work and you know, and I, and then I think the, the process for a leader is different than the process for a community.

And I think that's it. I, not that I wouldn't say, I would say there was a lot of pain when we were making the decisions we made, but I knew they were the right things to do. And so then you have to lead well, but then, you know, you also need time to, okay, what just happened? What just happened? What did we just go through?

And now I do, there's some people writing in business right now about the collective trauma of leadership. Of leading during COVID, which I'm super fascinated about. What that's going to show and

**Blair:** that's it? No, I think that's right on. I mean, it's so, uh, let's, let's focus in on that. What you just said [00:31:00] about, there's a difference between how a leader engages with grief and then the corporate grief.

And I wonder if, if you could kind of talk a little bit about. Your observations of, cause it sounds like what you're saying is self it's self care that that leaders do have to recognize that grieving well is a part of their own self care. Have you had experience in that? I mean, how did you have that kind of self care?

**Hopkins:** Well, I, I do think that I had to go through the grief. I think I had to do that personally, and it is self care, but it's also, where's God leading me. I feel like there's a, there was a personal bit of like, how did, how did I process and make sense of having taken apart something I'd given 15 years of my life to.

To build. And I was expecting when we started the process that I'd be spending the next 15 here. Right. [00:32:00] And so I think, but I think there was an invitation from the Lord to me, honestly, that was do I want to go somewhere new and, and really one of the things that had come out. Of the house process was, you know, it, we weren't because we were working harder, harder, harder, harder, harder, and not getting further, more sustainable things had to change.

It actually was for our own health resilience. Right. So, anyway, I, but for me, and again, because it would have been easy. As a three on the Enneagram to just talk about the success. I, there aren't many emerging churches, missional communities. Fresh express or whatever you want to call what we were that sustained for 15 years and then spun [00:33:00] out three organizations that all have a life of their own and could all stand on their own two feet without me.

I mean, that was in, that is work. I'm proud of, but I could have focused on that and not paying attention to the loss. And so I did get a new spiritual director cause I knew. Do the work loan. And I knew I wouldn't do the work alone, so, and I, and then I think the pandemic helped because it made me stop. So I quit traveling, right?

So the Providence of God did not escape me. And a lot of like the, we did this work at, at a time, you know, and one of the things that was really interesting was we separate separated. The first thing we did was we separated

geographically. Well, you know, we just wouldn't have, I wonder if we would do that again, you know, like the timing made all the difference, right.

So, [00:34:00] but I think. I do think there are two parts to the grief work, and one is leading people and leading communities through change, letting things go, stopping, letting things go and all of it, you know, the, the rest of that article talks about, you know, it's in order to go back to purpose, it's an order for, you know, re-imagined practice and that's the invitation, you know, personally for me, Blair is, you know, I came to the UK in 2004 asking a set of questions about the church in the future.

Like the questions I was asking are now mainstream. And I want to ask new questions. I mean, I personally, I love being on the edge and I think that's where my calling is. So it's like, what are the questions that I need to ask now that are going to influence the next 20 years? And you have to stop doing something [00:35:00] in order to get to that.

**Blair:** So, yeah. So what you're doing, you're tying our muscles together here, which so we've got. You know, grieving well, and then another muscle is expanding imagination. And what I hear you saying is, yeah, of course, they're connected that unless we, we tend to our grief, then we're not going to get to God's imagination that, that God is inviting us to have these feelings to move through the grief so that we can have a new vision in a way for the, for the new season.

Um, so, so tell us how that has emerged then tell us about. Rooted good. And about how, how God's imagination has taken off. Um, since, since the grief has, has kind of

**Hopkins:** happened, you know, a lot of people think of us as consultants, but one of the things that we were doing when we were going through the processes, we just kept being like, we.

We're practitioners and we're [00:36:00] collaborators. Um, and we don't want to be on a plane all the time, just working with someone else, you know, and kind of giving, telling people what to do and then leaving them to do the work. It was like, how do we work with more people, more intentionally closer. Anyway. I don't know if that makes sense, but it's been super interesting that we were able to take so much of what we did as practitioners.

And then we develop the oil cost project and we have 40 churches looking at developing social enterprises, aligning money emission. We've created. Over 12

new tools that we can like give out that we can make really readily accessible so people can download them, use them. We can connect people to one another and let people share experiences.

Instead of before it felt like everything was a bit clunky and because of [00:37:00] how we were operating, it was. Unaffordable. So we've been able to like drive some of the costs down, make things more accessible, and we've just been having a lot of fun. Mark Sampson, mark EllisDon and I, and then t-to, um, Ponce joined our team and, you know, we've just, we've been able to go, okay, who are we at our best as practitioners and as people that can actually help people, both innovate and develop the path to make their, their ideas reality.

And then at the same time, I think for me, there's been a part where I'm not having to make everything work. So I get to do the part that I'm best at. I get to be creative. I get to do a bit more dreaming. I've been able to do a lot more writing. And with that there's yeah. I feel like I'm entering a new season of my own vocational life.

So I don't know if that's helpful.

**Blair:** Yeah. I mean just when I'm reflecting on as you're sharing and just throughout our [00:38:00] conversation so far, is this idea that sometimes what we're invited to grieve is expectations. And by that, I mean, like our own expectations for how we thought things were going to go about our own idea of our, how our ministry trajectory is going to be.

It's just interesting. In, in other words, what I'm seeing is that sometimes in order to become more of who we are meant to be, we have to let go of some of the identity that we had. That that's just a part of this invitation that God has for us. Like you said, to become our best. And I love this question that you all wrestled with, who are we at our best?

I hope that we can. You know, create space for each other to discern that and recognize that sometimes in answering that question, it means that we have to let parts of ourselves go in so that we can become more of, of the best that God wants us to be. If that makes sense. So I I'm wondering how this is a very personal question, Shannon, but how has all of this changed you personally?

That you have seen [00:39:00] yourself let go of, um, and as a leader in order to become your best. Yeah, that's

**Hopkins:** a great question. I, so one thing that I wrote down earlier as we were talking was there's something changed in me. That is about a lightness of being, and I think, I think I quit striving and I quit feeling like I had to achieve everything yesterday.

Um, yeah,

**Blair:** I'm just laughing Shannon, because I'm a three, two. So what I mean, you just hit me in the heart here, which is good. So keep going, keep going. This is.

**Hopkins:** My patients grew. I think I had to learn. I've had to learn to say no a lot more, which is really hard for me. Like, I, I don't know. Sometimes I, I think it's from, cause I'm from a woman from the south of a certain age, but I, I really struggle with disappointing people and saying, no, this is really interesting.

This really [00:40:00] isn't about the work of Rudy. Good. Or maybe even Nutrish cast, but it is about the community. So one of the things. That had become a tradition in London. Was I through a Thanksgiving? And it was epic. It was like ongoing. It was, I mean, at our, and we chose to do our ending ceremony and our spin-out process for the community at Thanksgiving, there were like 95 people there.

Right? Like it was epic. And the one thing I said, Was I couldn't wait to have Thanksgiving. That was norm like family style again. That's what I wanted to reclaim. Even though I loved it. I have all these rich memories of Thanksgiving in London with my wider. The spiritual community and deepest friends, but I wanted to go back to something that felt more like family.

And so the COVID was great because I didn't have to say no to anybody because we weren't allowed to have [00:41:00] more than six people in a room together. But this year I had like 30 people call me in the week before things. Are you doing Thanksgiving? Have I not been in bus? I'm like, no, no, I am doing things, but I am doing family style Thanksgiving and I'm sorry, you're not invited.

And it was hilarious. We had nine people this year and. I realized like how easy it was to stick to my guns, because I knew I had an image in my head of what I wanted, what was important and what was of this season and not of the last season. I think that what are we when we're at our best? And I would say, I think this is, you know, team is so important to me and mark Mark Sampson.

And I think we really do want everyone to flourish and to be at their best and their unique gift. So I think we, we keep asking, okay, is this really what you [00:42:00] want to do? Is this where you think we should be heading? Right. Is that, and how fulfilling are you finding this? So we've been asking big questions at rooted.

Good. Like is our biggest gift designing and helping people innovate the future? Or is it scaling like the tools and resources we have? Well, the truth is none of us are big, like marketing salespeople, right? Like we want the tools to get out there, but our biggest gift is. Understanding a problem and helping to solve it.

And let's spend most of our time doing that. It's also work that flows out of us and gives us life and helps us have that lightness of being, I don't know. That's where your question at me.

**Blair:** Yeah. And just the, the, the lightness of being that to me, I think indicates that I'm, I'm in the flow of the [00:43:00] spirit.

That I'm, that I'm really living out God's purposes for me, if I'm feeling that lightness, because that's, that's the fruit of the spirit there, um, that joy, that, that energy for what you're doing. So, um, all right. I want to, I know our time is nearing an end, but I'd love to hear you share. So we've been talking a lot about grief and certainly I think corporately.

As a church as a, as the body of Christ, we're having some grief right now because it's ch things are changing. It's, it's obvious that, that the pandemic has accelerated the decline. I mean, we can go into all of this that people in the pews are looking around and not seeing nearly as many people. So the church is changing.

There's a lot of grief. And I wonder from your perspective, and I haven't prepped you for this question or anything, but, but as you're on the edge of the church, you're, you're seeing all these possibilities, your imagination and the imagination of your team is, is flourishing. I'm wondering what is the hope that you have.

To offer for the church. What are you seeing that might give us a [00:44:00] vision for what's possible and what God is doing through all of this?

**Hopkins:** Um, I love the question because I'm, I'm full of hope and full of hope for, for the church, the church writ large. Right? So I think there's a, there's a book as a church planter that I loved.

I've been talking about it a lot lately. I mean it's, it's old. So it was written in the nineties, but it's called sacred cows. Make gourmet burger. That's a great title, right? Sacred cows, my core, my burgers. And, and I just think that it's again, it's like when we're willing to let go, the what is something really new and beautiful can come.

And I actually think it's, it's better than we can imagine. Like, I really believe. That actually what's happened by letting go of Matriciana house and sea and spinning it out into all this new work. Like [00:45:00] there's like multiple things have happened that have built different types of communities in way, bigger ways than I could have imagined that's made the work go out.

So. And that's I think for the church, I really believe that the future is more exciting than the past, but I think we're actually, if we can let go of fear and if we can let go of nostalgia. Then I just think, and then if we can say, okay, go, we're going to trust you to lead us into the future. Then, you know, we go into the communities in a different way, in a different posture.

We, we don't exist for our own survival, but really for the, the love of God and the love of neighbor. And, and there are so many opportunities right now. And. You know, I was talking to someone this morning and I mean, people that, that really think, okay, churches have led food [00:46:00] pantries for a hundred years, but now let's start food co-ops and really, and, and use them to really address food, poverty, and solve these problems.

And I think that's the work of God in our communities. Right. And they're going to take us somewhere. New. And then there is a spiritual hunger and P people want to know. They, I, I think young people in particular, they, they want to know like, is, is there something to the Christian life that is actually going to change my life and change the way I live.

Right. That's going to make things better. Right. They don't want just the, just the religious ness of it. Is there anything real to it. And so, and I just think there's so many opportunities, so I, but I think it's gonna, you know, there's pain, there's, there's gonna be some pain and it, and it's gonna take and require some bold leadership and it's gonna look [00:47:00] like death before it looks like life.

And I just think, um, but I think that that's where it's exciting. Wow.

**Blair:** Yeah. It's going to look like death before it looks like, I think

**Hopkins:** often, but you know, anything that grows and grows and grows. So there's a woman called Kate Raworth, who has a book called doughnut economics. She has a Ted talk, which is worth watching, but she says, you know, anything that grows and grows and grows forever cancer around.

But we avoid pain, we avoid pain and, you know, Blair, I wonder why. And particularly, I wonder why as Christians, like, I just think the gospel, the Bible is story after story of there's a lot of pain there and why do we think we should be exempt from that? But, yeah. So it's going to look like death, I think before it looks like lie, but I think that that's the only [00:48:00] way we're going to get somewhere name.

**Blair:** Yeah, right on. Right on. Wow. This has been such a joy. Shannon always to be in your presence is just. Grace upon grace and I wish he lived a little closer. I wish you were in Texas. I know that's a little selfish of me because I know you're doing amazing, great work in London too, but, um, cause I feel like we would regularly have tea together.

Uh, so I, I, I just appreciate your vision and give God thanks for you and pray God's blessings on you in this new season. So thank you so much for joining us today.

**Hopkins:** Uh, thanks. Blair. It's been such a privilege. I really love you. And Lisa and the work of TMF is so important. I believe in the ecosystem and I will make my way back to Texas soon.

I promise. In fact, I'm going to be there a few times in 20, 22, as long as you know, the pandemic goes in the right direction. I guess

**Blair:** we will look forward to that for sure. So thank you, Shannon.

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Thanks for listening.