

Speaker 1: 0:00

You lived in Washington, DC in some capacity, right? Yeah . Well , yeah .

Speaker 2: 0:05

I lived in Washington DC for I'll call it two years. Okay. Yeah. Like Baker's dozen. Yeah. Like 2003, 2005, something like that lived on Capitol Hill.

Speaker 1: 0:19

Who's the most recognizable person you ran into on the, on the bad streets of DC.

Definitely.

Speaker 2: 0:25

Ted Kennedy. Whoa. Yeah, for sure. Ted Kennedy, man. That was one of the, yeah, that was one of the highlights of my time in DC was in a press conference where Ted Kennedy, it was a fairly small room as I recall, but he was talking about healthcare and it was during the George W. Bush administration and one of his great political lines from because he was, you know, he touted health care for a lot of his career and was passionate about that. Um, and I don't remember all the specific legal or political differences , uh, at the time around health care and the George W. Bush administration. But one of the great lines from that press conference was , uh, George W. Bush wants to privatize healthcare come fall of 2004, which is the November presidential election. I say, we privatized George w

Speaker 1: 1:22

Oh, which was this great political theater. Yeah, absolutely. That sounds like the olden days with the powdered wigs and banging of canes and occasional fish, there is C

Speaker 2: 1:36

You know, you're such a natural at this.

Speaker 1: 1:41

Are you saying I should run for office? Maybe? Yes . I think I can get right in there with the best of them.

Speaker 2: 1:46

I will endorse you from the pine street church pulpit, which will be, Oh, don't tell Holly that. Definitely not. Yeah. It would be a major violation of the Johnson amendment,

Speaker 1: 1:58

Right? The Johnson amendment for our listeners who don't know what that is, what is the Johnson amendment? So the Johnson

Speaker 2: 2:04

Amendment basically is a provision where it ensures that religious leaders do not endorse or oppose up a political figure , uh , for public office so that the church and houses of worship do not become political action committees. So that doesn't mean it's a muzzle on people like me , uh, in this work. Um , speaking out on the major issues of the day immigration, healthcare run the list. It's not like that. It's just that we can , there are two main components to the Johnson amendment and maybe Holly can talk more about this too. Uh , you just can't oppose or endorse a political candidate from a pulpit and you can't take religious offerings and give them to partisan campaigns. That's what it amounts to.

Speaker 1: 2:56

Right? That seems like a pretty good idea. Um, because he get , you get some agenda issues there that could, that could bubble up

Speaker 2: 3:05

Today. We get to sit down with Holly Holeman . Holly is the general counsel and associate executive director of BJC, formally known as Baptist joint committee for religious Liberty in Washington DC. And I'm pretty sure it's the only faith based agency in the United States that really focuses on the religion clauses of the first amendment. And those are no establishment and free exercise. Yeah , I think, you know , there's a ,

Speaker 1: 3:35

A lot of confusion I hear around, you know, if there's mention of anything political from a pulpit, some people come shouting with their pitchforks saying that that's in violation of a separation of church and state. And in fact, it's, it's not, it's, it's the going up to the pulpit and saying, God wants you to vote for candidate X, Y, Z a or B. And, and there's a in, that's a very significant difference because those are two completely different realms. The idea of , uh, politics overlapping with society, you talked about immigration, you know, talk about healthcare , right ? Um, so those things overlap. They're always going to overlap and those conversations will come from pulpits, but it's not that hard to not, to just not endorse a candidate, you know? Um, you know, I can, I can say in my time with you, I've never seen you directly endorse or oppose a political candidate. So thank you for honoring the Johnson amendment.

Speaker 2: 4:40

Just thanks for saying that. I mean, I think it's unwise. I think it's unhealthy. I think it's, un-American to be blunt about that. Right. You know , we don't go to church or houses of worship to hear our religious leader, tell us who to vote for. Right. Right. And you know, that's the, the camel's nose in the tent as a , to use one of my favorite colloquialisms.

Speaker 1: 5:04

That one too. Yeah. That's a good one. Have you ever seen a camel in real life? I don't know. I actually got to ride a camel once at the new Orleans Audubon zoo. Pretty cool. Well, yeah, it was a two humped camel. I'm not sure there's probably a better zoological name for that, but , um, yeah, I think I got to feed the camel too . So it was pretty good .

Speaker 3: 5:30

Cool . But there were no tents so that wasn't on my radar back then.

Speaker 2: 5:46

Welcome to hyphenated life. We invite you to join us on this journey to explore the connection of the sacred and the secular that inspires us to become more fully alive.

[inaudible]

Speaker 4: 6:10

I'm going to talk the whole time . Wait, please wait. The meeting host will let you in soon open the door.

Speaker 2: 6:20

We were , we were jabbering on and on. Uh ,

Speaker 4: 6:23

David. It's nice to meet you . Nice

Speaker 2: 6:25

To meet you, Holly. Yeah, Andrew's making you wait at the door. He's not introducing you to the new people in the room. I'm sorry. That was very rude of me today. We are so delighted to be hosting our special guest. Holly Hollman Holly Holeman is the

general counsel and she is the associate executive director of BJC in Washington, DC. For those of you who are listening, who wonder what BJC means? It is the artist formerly known as Baptist joint committee for religious Liberty. Uh, Holly provides legal analysis of church state issues that arise before Congress, the courts and administrative agencies. Holly serves as adjunct professor of law at the Georgetown university law center where she co-teaches the church state law seminar. Holly has a BA in politics from the great wake forest university, hello, demon deacons, and her JD from the university of Tennessee college of law, where she was a member of the Tennessee law review and the national moot court team. Holly is married to Jay Smith and they have two beautiful and wonderful sons who live. Uh , they live in falls, church, Virginia, and Holly's most famous or most biggest claim to fame is that she was my first real boss at Baptist joint committee, fresh out of me coming from wake forest university school of divinity to BJC Holly Hollman . You are so great for coming on hyphenated life this week. Thank you for joining us and for sharing your expertise. Uh, you and I share a long history and it's just a total pleasure and delight and honor to have you today.

Speaker 4: 8:14

Uh , thanks. Andrea is great to be with you and fun to hear you doing your thing and this new endeavor, as well as to follow your career. You've come a long way since that , that first job. And I'm not going to take it personally, that after that you decided you're going to go into a field where you don't have a boss. Not because I was a bad boss, we learn a lot from each other.

Speaker 2: 8:39

You're amazing. Absolutely. Me too. So Holly, I want to start today. I'm not sure. I mean, we probably have some common listeners between the BJC podcast and now the emerging hyphenated life phenomenon. Um, but I , I'm kind of curious as I have listened to the BJC podcast and maybe one of those questions or something that's a little more assumed or embedded that folks might not necessarily ask about, but because I'm a pastor, I'm curious how you think about, how did you come to this work as an attorney who is so passionate about church state separation and religious Liberty? I think some of our listeners might be curious about what this means for you as a passion or a calling , uh , and as a vocation, not just a job, but a vocation.

Speaker 4: 9:32

Sure. Well, for those who aren't as familiar with BJC , um, I shouldn't say that it's been around for eight decades and its mission has been to defend and extend religious Liberty for all. And doing that by bringing that Baptist heritage to the idea that religion must be freely practice, you know, that , uh, that it's not the government's job to interfere in religion or to prop it up or advance it. That is the work of individuals. And so it's kind of this amazing vision of a institution, the nonprofit organization that was established out of a historic Baptist principle that really promotes religious freedom, not just for self-interests , but for everyone, which is also in our self-interest. And we think in the government's interest as well as individuals. And , um, I learned about that work. Um, I think when I was , uh, from, from my home church, so, you know, college years, I learned about BJC. I took a traditional path to law school and private practice working for big firms doing just employment law and litigation, but then had the opportunity to intern at BJC to come spend a semester in Washington and , um, learn all about the work and kind of put together the , the part of my faith story, which was in Baptist

churches, where there was a great emphasis on individual responsibility, as well as this concern for others. It it's not, it wasn't a church that was only concerned with individual salvation. There was concern for others in the community, but clearly the idea of being responsible for one's faith and , um , accountable for that was part of my Baptist upbringing. And then to figure out how that relates to our kind of constitution, our constitutional tradition that protects that individual freedom. So, so, and , and does it require Americans to be religious or be any kind of related, you know, religious people? It was cool as I was learning to , I was starting to be really interested in law to have that intern, that formative intern experience and learn about BJC. Then I went on the traditional path and then had the chance , uh , to work for BJC when my husband and I moved back to DC , um , for his work. So that's how I, that's how I got to was through loving the work they did, and then having the opportunity to do , um, watching really good Washington kind of work if I'm going to live in Washington , uh, might as well have a Washington job where I get to work with government and , um, media sources and not just, not just being a law firm, like I could be anywhere else. Um, but the , the calling developed even more over time, as I understood the richness of what it means to protect religious freedom for all , um , to get, to apply my legal skills and, you know , to practice in the area of constitutional law is a thing that most law students can only dream of doing, you know , you know, you don't get to always do that. So , uh, I appreciated the opportunity I was given, and then I've learned so much more , um, about how important it is. Not just to people who grew up like me, but people all over the country from all different backgrounds.

Speaker 2: 12:49

Thank you for sharing some of your story and journey. I'm not sure I've even heard you talk about that at least well, in this format. So thanks for taking time to say a little bit about that. And so I'd like to step into what is going on, you know, when I think about our listeners out there, especially, you know , some of our core members here at pine street church, and then just , um, other folks who are passionate about religious Liberty and the separation of church and state in the most historic Baptist way, which some of our lessors might not even know about how Baptists have contributed to Jeffersonian democracy in terms of church and state. But , um, Holly, what is going on now at the Supreme court level and some of the decisions that have been handed down recently that you would want to really highlight and underscore for some of our listeners, what, what court decisions have been handed down recently that, that might relate to houses of worship and , uh, what it means to be church in the middle of a pandemic?

Speaker 4: 13:56

Well, I think we can talk a lot about what it means to be church in a pandemic and the court's only slightly useful for us to do that. Right. We can talk about that. Let me just , let me say it a couple of things. I'm not the court , and then we can expand the conversation in the, in the hyphenated Lifeway, but , um, it's a really , uh, it's been a really interesting time. It was pretty in court the last few years, you know, we've had pets and personnel turnover during the Trump administration, right? Got three new justices. Um, I'd say religious Liberty has been in the news and the past decade in ways that have been , um, sometimes confusing or the term religious Liberty has been sort of misused to , to speak on just particular issues has been confusing about whether it's a conservative or liberal idea and who's for against it . And what that means for you as a

church member, crisp and Christian. So it's interesting time for religious Liberty at the core , you know, from a legal standpoint, it's always about what is the meaning of the first amendment and how do we uphold this dual promise in , um, religious Liberty law that says we protect the free exercise of religion and we keep government from establishing religion. So it's this two part that we protect individuals and accommodate religious practices. We want people to be free and led by , uh , religion or not, but we want, we , we believe that as a pluralistic society and our founders recognize that the government has a limited role in religious matters. And I would say the court in recent years has been , um, sort of diminishing has paid less attention to the no establishment clause. And so, as it been , we've seen opinions that sometimes get reported as pro religious Liberty. And sometimes BJC takes a different stance on them because we say no, actually causes is central it's half of the it's half of the game and the first amendment. So to weaken the establishment clause does not mean to aid religious Liberty. In fact, we were eight times that it can harm religious Liberty, that the more government is involved, whether that's funding, you know, letting certain funding and go to religious institutions or , um, approving of religious symbols on government property, things like that. When you, when you weaken those protections, we believe you end up harming religion and harming our religious Liberty tradition. So the concern of the court is sort of a lack of emphasis on no establishment and a lot of different things are happening on the free exercise side. If your listeners are really interested, you know, the , the, the new podcast series we did this year called respecting religion really was focusing on kind of the top issues, because there's so much going on in the world. And we wanted to have a place where we could have conversations about these big , um, religious Liberty matters. So that's kind of the big, the big picture. Um, a lot of people have said, Oh, wow, what's, you know , Holly, what do you think about these court cases? Um, they've made it all the way to the Supreme court over conflicts between government orders, a stay at home orders or limits on public gatherings , um, that apply to churches. And we've seen a lot of these. We've had three now cases go all the way to the Supreme court, where the court is asked whether or not to uphold a government restriction on individuals in worship. And , um, I think those, those cases, without going too , too far in this format and , and killing your listeners off, it is still a relatively new podcast and we don't wanna run it by off . Um, I think they just reflect the time that we're in, you know, we're, these are hard issues, right? These, these cases are where a church is saying the governor or the local authorities aren't letting us worship. And I just said , the first amendment protects us our ability to worship, right? So this is important. It's not just annoying, it's important. And it's hard, it's difficult, you know, governors and government officials are trying to protect all of their people, keep the virus from spreading and they have these constitutional standards to uphold. So there's a lot going on in those opinions. And , um, yeah, if you want to hear more about them, you can look more BJC website , uh, and, and our, our writings. And, and I'll , um,

Speaker 2: 18:24

I appreciate you saying, you know, it's both important and annoying. And as a pastor, like one of the things that's been annoying to me, and I think you and Amanda have alluded to the Amanda Tyler, by the way, who's the executive director of BJC, but you and Amanda have talked about this, I think on the respecting religion series, when we S you know, people compare, well, liquor stores are open and bike stores are open, but

my goodness, they are suppressing our religious Liberty because they're not allowing houses of worship to be open. Holly , what would you say? I mean, I guess sort of the, one of the general questions I would have is certainly that reference, but what's the balance, you know, right now of the free exercise clause of the first amendment, right. And we're living in the midst of the global health crisis. So what where's, where's the sensible center, if you will, in all of that?

Speaker 4: 19:20

I , I think that I was that, that we have to be , um, careful and we have to be smart and we don't want to just close down everything and we don't want to close churches and , um, or put restrictions on that aren't necessary, or that are worse than other comparable things. Now, just, you, you brought it up and so let's make it clear. You know, as in case you have a lot of listeners who aren't ready to church goers, church people , um, do things that it's not like going to the, it's not like going to the grocery store. We actually sit, hang out together. We get in each other's face and talk and we hug and we sing, and we do lots of things that I don't ever see happen at the grocery store. And the times I've been in a liquor store. And so , uh, I think, you know, those , there's those , I say that , you know, we joke about the liquor store because it has this , um, this more, you have this feeling of, of, of it's so wrong. How could you let people go to the liquor store, not, and let them go to church. And I totally sympathize with that. You know, it sounds ridiculous on its face, but it's not the right question, right? These, these government orders are trying to keep commerce going without spreading the virus. And I don't think many , um, many of the restrictions on churches have been intended to harm , uh , worship to harm religious exercise and where they have gone too far, where they needed to be amended. We're seeing that happen. And that's, that's the case in the last, the last case that went to the court, it was a very severe restriction that in a hotspot could have no more than 10 people in a church building. And that sounds just on its face, kind of crazy if you're imagining a big cathedral, right? Because you know, a better rule would be in relation to the space. You know, that said, this is one conversation. We can also just have the other conversation of like all the great things that churches are doing that don't even involve that risk, especially the churches from our tradition that do not involve the risk of being indoor together, where we might infect someone, it could lead to their death. So , um, I think, I think we're getting smarter. I think the government orders are getting better. I think there's a lot to learn. I'm pretty sympathetic to the government's efforts here. I'm also sympathetic to religious people and their desire to be together. And especially some traditions that are different from ours that really require in person , um, contact to do certain things, to experience certain, certain rituals. So , um, we needed it . It's another area where, you know, we need to be a little kinder to each other. Listen, think about other people, figure it out, do no harm pine streets , uh, not meeting in person, right.

Speaker 2: 22:21

You're not meeting in person no. Up at the very beginning. You know, we saw, we thought this is the best way for us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Right. And , uh , so to honor, and it abide public health officials, decisions and advice. Uh, we're actually a church Holly that pays attention to science, believe it or not. And , uh, we have done that, I think very well. And it's also really opened up as even this podcast, even hyphenated life, we've been dreaming about this for a year and a half or more. And it

just felt like some of the timing of being able to launch this podcast and do some new creative projects in digital space. It's, it's , uh , really opened up a creative channel for us that we're grateful about. And we're trying to make the most of, but yeah, we're, nobody's eager to get back in , you know, debris on one another anytime soon. And so what do we do in the meantime to be, I keep saying, I'm sure that our members are church members of pine street in Boulder here who are listening. Get really tired of me saying we are the church scattered when we can't be the church gathered. I mean, I think we're learning a lot about what it really means to be the church when we're not in a physical location right now. And that is a , that's a big deal for churches everywhere, obviously, but we're, we're learning that lesson on our own here too

Speaker 4: 23:47

Well. And I'm not surprised to hear that from you. And that's definitely an approach that I've seen in a lot of congregations where I am, but I also am in a position where I see , um, you know, a variety of responses and you kind of joke, you know, say we're a church that follows science. Of course, a lot of churches are full of people and leadership that believe in science and want to follow that. And that's a primary concern for people's health. It's important to say that out loud and people know that it's also important to recognize that a lot of church leaders were the first to do the right thing and to lead, to use their voices, to lead and say, we're not going to spread this. We're not going to, we're going to find other ways and we're going to help get the word out. And we're going to explain why this is. So I, you know, when we, when we talk about the cases, sometimes we seem to be focused on some congregations that are pushing the limits that are saying, you know, don't, don't harm me. Don't , uh, don't mess with me. I've got this right to, to worship the way I want to. And of course law is not that we protect religious Liberty, but not at all cost , um, to other other concerns. Um, but there have also been , uh, Amanda and I've talked about this a little bit on our podcast . There's been so much great leadership from religious communities in, in, in being passed via pastor and church to each other , um, by check, checking on each other and doing it different ways. It's, it's been, there's been a lot of positive , um, leadership from churches that I've seen that don't involve, you know, conflict with government orders.

Speaker 2: 25:25

Exactly. Yeah. So, Holly, I want to kind of circle back to that idea. You mentioned, you brought up a little bit earlier about, you know, what religious Liberty, how, how that phrase has been used. And we're obviously however many days away from inauguration day, January 20, right. 20, 21 with a new administration. But I was just kind of curious, what, what have you noticed about, and what has BJC , uh, really done in, in, in their work and your work about what religious Liberty has meant , uh, during the Trump administration, let's say, how has that been used or abused or distorted or used for good , uh, w w what's been your angle of vision about that , uh, over the last few years in terms of religious Liberty, because I, I just really want our listeners to hear about that. That's one of those , uh, somewhere on the spectrum of important and annoying to me as well about how religious Liberty can be co-opted , uh , and really used as , uh , as I told David earlier, a political football, what's your front row seat to that. And what would you say to, to our folks about religious Liberty and how it's been used?

Speaker 4: 26:41

Yeah, well, you know, we, religious Liberty is a foundational American principle. It is, and it's that, that Congress will make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof is the first 16 words of our bill of rights. So we know it's important and it's important to people across the religious spectrum and the political spectrum , um, whether you are religious or not, if you're not, you , you may really appreciate it . The government's not going to impose some religious tests on you to , to vote or to run for office. So I really it's a, it's a problem. And religious Liberty is used in partisan terms because we only have two parties and we get pretty intense about that, right? So one party starts putting their, their , um, priorities in a religious Liberty frame. And the other, the other part is like, not that then, you know, that they are, co-opting the term religious Liberty. Now we can disagree about a lot of, a lot of issues and kind of how you come out on particularly difficult religious Liberty disputes. Um, but we shouldn't, we should not ever accept religious Liberty to be coterminous, it's a problem when we allow any political party to use religious Liberty as a partisan term, because we all value it it's important to us. And while we might disagree on specific issues, we all care about religious freedom. We want to protect that as an important American value we have seen in the last, I would say, especially in the last decade or so, a lot of conflicts between , um, the need to protect LGBTQ rights and people who have religious objections to the same-sex marriage. And I think that has done a lot of damage to people's understanding of what religious freedom is.

Speaker 1: 28:36

Yeah. I don't want to undermine the entire premise of our podcast here, where we like to get rid of the line between sacred and secular. Um, but a pretty hard line is that line of separation of church and state. And I think on a very basic level, I , I hear you, you know, obviously anything that gets to the Supreme court is probably a pretty complex issue. You know, anything that, that runs that high up the flag pole is not simple, but I think for a lot of people, there's some very basic, simple confusions about , uh , what religious Liberty means. And , uh, you know, I think it , it seems to me fairly obvious that , uh, you know, for example, you can't force someone to pray in a school, right. Prayed to a Christian God, for example. Um, and to flip that around and say that that is a violation of your religious Liberty is just, it seems so backwards and obvious to me, short of banging my head against the table, a what's a,

Speaker 2: 29:42

Maybe an easy way to , to get people to understand the difference between those two things.

Speaker 4: 29:47

No , I think, I think the public schools are a great place to get people to understand what the first amendment means, because , uh, you know, the folks that you're talking about first saying that they, you know, they want to pray in school. I would say that if you press them, I would say in most cases about 80 to 90% of those fall ways , the conversation continues. In other words, they don't want someone to pray a different kind of prayer. They don't want the teacher descriptive prayer. That's at odds with what they teach at home. And so they really, a lot of times those conversations are worth having, because people are just expressing that they want in their school system. They want in their community and culture a sense of , um, of appreciation for and respect for their Christian values. Guess what we all do. We all want that. And we need to show that to

each other. But if, when press, when they're pressed, do they really want government sponsored prayer? Not usually. So it's really a good example to talk about religion in the public schools. Once you get people to realize that the public school is a mini government, right, when it says Congress, you know , can't establish religion. That doesn't just mean Congress. It also means Colorado. And it also means Boulder and also means whatever the name of the elementary school is there at the high school. So , um, in a , in a government setting, there is religious freedom for individuals to be Christian Muslim atheist. And that comes up in different ways, but the government , the school itself should not advance those values, or I mean, should not advance religion. And , um, any of those particular religions, nor should it denigrate any of those students and their religious beliefs, that's the, you know, the public nature of, of schools and really that's, that extends to us just as citizens, right? We want to have a system where we're all free to follow our religious traditions and principles, but we can't impose them on each other and where they're in conflict, we have to work it out. And it depends on the context that you're in, on how we protect religious Liberty. And , um, yeah, there's some, there's some tough questions out there, but I would say anyone who's interested can, you know , get help by learning more and testing themselves and see, can you stand up for the religious Liberty of someone with whom you disagree and try to do that, try to do that, and then see what you can tolerate , um, and , and seek an aware where it is that we are most free to all be different and where we come together and in ways that are , um, you know, that are shared and civic and are not explicitly religious.

Speaker 2: 32:26

I think you said that maybe over the last couple of years, it's not been so intense. Right. But all I can remember, not all I can remember, but I think a big part of this, this mythology of a Christian America does come up during December, where there are something like 14 different religious holidays in the month of December. I mean, welcome to a pluralist democracy, right. So why do we say, Oh my goodness, you know, the other mythology being, wow, Christianity we're being so oppressed in the United States, we can't even say Merry Christmas at target these days. You know, and now we we've had a president who said, well, now you can say Merry Christmas again. You know , so what is that? But it's , uh , it's another one of those political footballs , one of these culture war crosshairs , right? That you gain political points by saying these certain things on , on the stump , so to speak that doesn't do any good, right. For, for religious Liberty in its , at its heart and what that really means. Uh, and so , uh , I guess, yeah, I mean, it's one of those, I keep coming back to that spectrum of important and annoying, right. But the whole Merry Christmas crusade that, you know, people want to carry on, that really is an annoyance to me as a Christian pastor, I want to honor and respect my neighbors who may or may not, you know , be Christian. They may have no belief. They may be Jew Jews or Muslims, or what have you Zoroastrians whatever. So how do we, Holly , what's your advice this time of year about all of that even, and I'm really happy to hear you say that the last couple of years, it , it seems to not be as intense from your perspective that culture war thing with Christmas, but it's still in the atmosphere.

Speaker 4: 34:24

No, it's still there. So Andrew knows, we've talked about this through the years, you know, the there's this, this time of year, you hear these , um, this conflict, these people

would say, Oh, you know, America's lost its way. I can't even say Merry Christmas. And it's this real sort of self-centered , um, view of religious freedom. Um, and it really, obviously, it's not a legal issue. You know, now you can go on this street, you can go in the store and say Merry Christmas, or, you know, a lot worse to people. And , um, it , so it's not a legal issue, but just as a matter of, of kindness and awareness , uh, it's good to note, you know, not everyone celebrates Christmas. And when I say happy holidays, I don't mean any offense to any Christian. Um, I'm just trying to say it's a fun season. And I know that I know that there are Christians and others,

Speaker 2: 35:21

Christian, and I don't mean any offense to other Christians when I say happy holidays. Right. I'm offended that you didn't know it was offended.

Speaker 4: 35:31

Yeah. So I think we , maybe in this crowd, we all, we know the annoying part of that is I guess the important part of it is just to stop and , and , and recognize with each other, that we are, we are diverse and that in some communities, Christians may, for whatever reason may feel like they're not valued. And we want to recognize that too, and understand that too. And, and we don't want it to play out in our, you know, our December happy shopping, but, you know, we can learn from that. We can, we can talk to people and take the temperature down. And I think that there's been some of that going on. And I think, I think it's important that we continue to try to do that. And it's, it's similar. I haven't seen as much of the war on Christmas talk this year, but I've thought about it as we've entered the , uh , holiday season and all of the conflicts over masks and people feeling strongly that I don't want to wear a mask and you can't make me wear a mask when , um, you know, it's really just a way of looking out for other people. It's not to oppress you. Right. And when I say again , it's like, when I say happy holidays, I'm not trying to oppress you , you and your , your Merry Christmas. But , um, it's just being aware of other people and other things around you . And obviously our country has a lot to work on in that area.

Speaker 1: 36:54

You basically said this, but for the record for our listeners, it's not illegal to say Merry Christmas, right? Yeah. You can go into target and , and nobody, it was never illegal in . Certainly nobody has made it legal again, you know? So taking credit for something that never happened or

Speaker 4: 37:16

That's right, that's not, we can, we can talk about serious religious Liberty issues, but that's not one that's gonna, that's gonna make the case.

Speaker 1: 37:24

Right . That's kinda what I was thinking.

Speaker 2: 37:27

We are so grateful Holly, that you've joined us for hyphenated life today. Thank you for your expertise, for your passion and for doing all of the great work that you have been doing for such a long time with BJC. I am personally grateful , uh, and for, for your formation in my own journey and being an inspiration to my life, I am grateful. And you have helped me live in that hyphen space in more ways than one that church state church, hyphen state separation , uh , space , um, and just, just my, my own path. So thank you. Thank you for your wisdom and expertise and joining us today.

Speaker 4: 38:08

Well, it's been great to be with you both, and I'm so happy about the good work that you all are doing at pine street church and out through, throughout the world, as you go from here and this podcast and all of your other work, it's a wonderful expression of how to use religious Liberty responsibly. And I, I love it. So it's great to be with you. And , uh, our partnership will continue for sure. It will. And Holly, for those who are listening, who

Speaker 3: 38:36

May, may or may not be new to BJC, where can they find you and what do they need to do?

Speaker 4: 38:42

So you can find us@wwwbjconline.org . You can subscribe to BJC podcast on any of the major platforms and the series that we did this year, that really focuses on these issues about the court and the Trump administration. And then the change toward a new administration coming is called respecting religion.

Speaker 3: 39:09

Everybody go to BJC, listen to respecting religion series on the BJC podcast. Ali Homan . Thank you . Thank you . I feel needed. Life is a production of pine street church in Boulder, Colorado hosted by Andrew Doherty and David longed . You , the podcast is produced by Phil Norman and executive producer, Alexi Molden special, thanks to our guests today and the Leo Hill trust of Boulder, Colorado [inaudible]

Speaker 4: 40:49

Staff . I have a cool client. That's

Speaker 3: 40:52

Right. Okay. Kind of a big deal. You are a big deal, big deal .

Speaker 4: 40:58

I did not need to make jokes like that and get us going on

Speaker 3: 41:01

Now . We've already. So we've got that. So big deal.