

Audio file

[Victoria Loorz.mp4](#)

Transcript

00:00:03 Alison

OK, great.

00:00:04 Alison

Thanks for taking the time to speak with me today.

00:00:06 Victoria

For sure.

00:00:09 Alison

So I have a couple questions for you.

00:00:12 Alison

Feel free to, you know, answer them however you'd like.

00:00:16 Alison

So the first question I have is why spirituality in nature or Wild Church and specifically why now?

00:00:27 Victoria

Yeah, it's a good question because it's happening.

00:00:32 Victoria

This is not this movement.

00:00:34 Victoria

This wild church movement is not something that I or anybody sort of made happen.

00:00:40 Victoria

It's something that is happening, it's emerging and it's emerging because we're at a point in our, you know, sort of collective, cultural and ecological history that demands us to see and deal with the underlying, not only the structural damage that has been done, getting involved in creating new structures protecting those most vulnerable, but also as protecting those most vulnerable, so the systems are unraveling, but also to look at what are the underlying world views and ways of thinking and living and being that are causing it.

00:01:26 Victoria

And if we don't deal with it at that level, we're just putting large bandaids on a system that needs to collapse.

00:01:34 Victoria

And so the underlying, you know, one of one of the many underlying systemic disconnects or problems is our severe disconnection from the natural world.

00:01:50 Victoria

You know, not just our spirituality, but our our way of living that we are.

00:01:55 Victoria

We have been systemically and systematically disconnected from the natural world over generations by the forces of empire, and patriarchy, and racism, and colonization.

00:02:11 Victoria

And unless we, you know, sort of like I've been in, let me, let me answer this another way.

00:02:16 Victoria

I've been involved in both indoor churches as well as in activism in the climate movement for pretty much my whole life.

00:02:25 S Victoria

And what I found is there was, there was that foundational disconnection from the land herself in an intimate and reverent way.

00:02:35 Victoria

That was missing on both sides, both within the church, which is sort of obvious, and within the environmental movement traditionally and so that's where I started too, in my own, you know, sort of like despair, started to listen more deeply to the land herself, and for me it was a a large oak tree.

00:03:00 Victoria

And I was able to begin to see how that disconnection from the rest of the natural world, as if nature didn't include us, as if nature was out there, as if the rest of the natural world or the rest of the alive world was the environment for the humans.

00:03:20 Victoria

To, you know, prosper and live and and seeing the rest of the world as resource for us is not the way life works.

00:03:30 Victoria

Like life is a system of predation of predator and prey.

00:03:37 Victoria

For any one being to be alive, another being has to sacrifice their life, whether it's a rabbit or a carrot.

00:03:45 Victoria

And so that isn't what I'm what I think is the problem.

00:03:49 Victoria

The problem is how we only see ourselves as the predators, as humans, and the rest of the world is there for our taking.

00:03:57 Victoria

And so that foundational worldview absolutely has to change for survival, really.

00:04:05 Victoria

And so Wild Church and this re-weaving our lives back into belonging into relationship with the rest of the world is something that doesn't come naturally, but it's deeply within us.

00:04:21 Victoria

And so it's a remembering.

00:04:23 Victoria

It's not something new.

00:04:25 Victoria

It's remembering who we are and how we relate to the rest of the world.

00:04:29 Victoria

And so these are spiritual practices because humans forget, the word religion means religiose means reconnected, like a ligament.

00:04:38 Alison

Oh, wow.

00:04:39 Victoria

Yeah, it means reconnection.

00:04:41 Victoria

And so humans have always had religion.

00:04:43 Victoria

There's all different kinds of religions and all of them at the core etymologically, and I think at the core of what they're about, is about reconnecting 'cause we tend to exile and return.

00:04:55 Victoria

You know the fall and return.

00:04:58 Victoria

It's just part of our story.

00:05:01 Victoria

We I wish it wasn't.

00:05:02 Victoria

I wish we could always stay in alignment.

00:05:05 Victoria

But it's not real, you know, so what's real is we need to have spiritual practices to help us to reconnect ourselves in with our place in with one another and even within ourselves, that there's something about reconnecting with the land, that is connected with our own psyches and our own hearts and our own emotions.

00:05:25 Victoria

That is a little hard to understand or like sort of have to wrap your head around it.

00:05:32 Victoria

But your heart doesn't have a hard time with that.

00:05:34 Victoria

Your heart knows you know that we know how we feel when we spend extended time immersed in nature, in the rest of nature.

00:05:46 Victoria

We, you know, our stress level goes down, our heart rate goes down. We feel more alive. So we have this evidence, but it's because it's real and we aren't just connected by the CO2 and the oxygen exchange and then food and water exchange, we're also connected emotionally and spiritually, and so to live to do this spiritual work of reconnection is supported by meeting together to create and adapt spiritual practices to remember who we are in the midst of this interconnected reality of life.

00:06:26 Alison

That makes sense for sure.

00:06:28 Alison

Uh, I'm gonna pause the recording just for a second 'cause I'm getting distracted 'cause I can't really hear it very well.

00:06:33 Alison

So I'm worried that it's not gonna be very loud, one second.

00:06:39 Alison

So kind of connecting to something you mentioned in the last question.

00:06:43 Alison

I'm wondering as we move into the fall season and the weather starts to cool down, what are some practices or spiritual practices you'd suggest when it comes to connecting with the nonhuman world during during the season?

00:06:58 Victoria

Yeah, that's always a question for people because we're so used to this disconnection, frankly, you know, we're so used to regulating our comfort level.

00:07:09 Victoria

You know, we have heaters, we have air conditioners, and we should, you know, it's great.

00:07:13 Victoria

We need to survive, but we have created a society that is oriented around our comfort and so we called days where it's raining bad days and we call days where it's sunny and not hot good days.

00:07:26 Victoria

And so that kind of relationship with, "I'll engage with the rest of the world when it's a nice sunny, not too hot day, but I'm going to stay inside and stay protected and disconnected."

00:07:40 Victoria

On the other days there's there's something in you know there's something colonize-y about that.

00:07:47 Victoria

You know, it's like we have decided in our dominant culture that nice sunny days that springtime and summer, that daytime, not night time and you know that masculine, not feminine, that these are the the acceptable ways of of being in our culture.

00:08:12 Victoria

And so what we do is we cut off everything else that's not in those acceptable ways within the dominant culture.

00:08:19 Victoria

And so we're cutting off part of who we are.

00:08:21 Victoria

And we can't.

00:08:22 Victoria

We can't survive.

00:08:23 Victoria

We can't move into the new story without reintegrating.

00:08:28 Victoria

So that can be practiced just by going outside and being outside in the rain.

00:08:36 Victoria

You know, maybe don't take your umbrella knowing that you're going outside to just be in relationship with the weather this day.

00:08:48 Victoria

The core practice of most wild churches is, and I think, and I know you do it at Wild Earth, is this wandering time. It's a reverent slowing down and being and listening and being in relationship and feeling these the rest of the world. So on days where it's cold, on days when it's rainy or snowy even, you take the time to just wander.

00:09:20 Victoria

Just go outside.

00:09:21 Victoria

Just be outside.

00:09:22 Victoria

Pay attention to the rain, feel it on your body.

00:09:26 Victoria

It's like in the summer when you are cursing the gnats all the time, then you have a whole relationship of annoyance with this being, with this whole species.

00:09:37 Victoria

And there's something about sort of going, "Oh wow."

00:09:40 Victoria

I'm telling I'm telling you from experience, this is something that I've experienced.

00:09:45 Victoria

You know, my whole relationship with the gnats, and when I realized that and I sort of said, "Oh, wow" and sort of had this internal dialogue within myself with the gnats, with the sacred, I was able to have a truce with these gnats.

00:10:01 Victoria

And I am not joking that I have not had an experience with gnats since then, where they're going into my ears and my eyes in my mouth. That there is some kind of real relationship there when we when we slow down and make time for that.

00:10:17 S Victoria

So to slow down and just have relationship with the rain, have relationship with the cold. And it doesn't mean I have to stay out for an hour.

00:10:25 Victoria

If it's if it's icy and it's dangerous, just sit at your front porch and and feel it. Go out at night time.

00:10:32 Victoria

Go out when it's dark.

00:10:34 Victoria

Look at the stars, or the fact that you can't see the stars 'cause of the storm.

00:10:38 Victoria

Feel the night air come, you know, befriend the night.

00:10:43 Victoria

So I think any practice that gets you out and in that slowing down sort of wandering reverent space is a practice I would recommend. You know another fun one is when you're out I like to make little mandalas, nature mandalas, and so using the leaves to to create a little nature mandala.

00:11:11 Victoria

That one is always good, the leaves and the branches.

00:11:13 Victoria

It helps you to be aware it slows you down.

00:11:16 Victoria

It's a form of play that is that is calming and that is actually changing your brain's plasticity. You know play is the main way that our brain changes, and so making these little mandalas or or creating a poem in relationship with the last geese that are flying through.

00:11:41 Victoria

These are ways that we can pay attention and be present with what is.

00:11:48 Alison

Yeah, for sure.

00:11:52 Alison

If you have anything else to add with this next question, if you don't, feel free to just let me know 'cause it's kind of similar to the last question.

00:12:04 Alison

Oh yeah, about like darkness.

00:12:06 Alison

And you know, how we can kind of associate that with like our emotions and and like practices to ground us as we kinda get that darkness?

00:12:14 Victoria

Yeah, I mean, I think I would just add to what you just said in your wisdom that as we've been disconnected from the feminine, from our emotions, from the dark, you know we've we've identified the dark as dangerous and scary and unknown, from the unknown, from the mystery.

00:12:35 Victoria

You know, we have been deeply disconnected from all of that.

00:12:39 Victoria

And so any practice we do that reconnects us, you know, taking a wander at night after it's dark, quietly in your neighborhood. There's something just really magical about it that helps to shift your relationship with with all of those.

00:12:55 Victoria

So all of the above, they're so interconnected that just taking a wander, just taking an intentional walk within your neighborhood, within your local park, you know, and there are dangers, so don't be unaware about it. But bring somebody with you.

00:13:20 Victoria

Bring your dog.

00:13:21 Victoria

Let people know.

00:13:22 Victoria

Bring your Mace.

00:13:24 Victoria

Whatever is depending on how safe your your outdoor spaces, but even if it's just going into your backyard and turning off all the lights in your house to be present with, or even in your apartment, you know if you're in the city, turning off all the lights and just being present every night before you go to sleep with the darkness. Befriending that darkness is befriending the darkness and the shadows within yourself.

00:13:50 Victoria

Perhaps a view that you aren't aware of that have been, you know, tucked away because you've decided at some young age that it's not acceptable.

00:14:00 Victoria

Allowing them to come out 'cause it it's also you're also putting the gifts of that part of you into...

00:14:06 Victoria

I've heard some people refer to that as shadow.

00:14:09 Alison

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:14:12 Alison

Wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about what prompted you to go from like a pastor of indoor churches to founding the Wild Church network?

00:14:25 Victoria

It was, you know, that little, that tree story I shared a little earlier where I was just burnt out, both from being a pastor and from being in the environmental movement.

00:14:39 Victoria

And recognizing, little by little that it was that deep disconnection from the natural world as sacred.

00:14:46 Victoria

And then I started diving into...

00:14:49 Victoria

At the time I was an associate pastor and so I preached. Not very often, you know, like five times a year.

00:14:56 Victoria

And every time I did, I would use it as an opportunity to dig into this question.

00:15:01 Victoria

Do I need to leave my the church?

00:15:06 Victoria

Do I need to leave Christianity where I was pastor in order to be faithful to the reality that I feel closest to the numinous, to God, to mystery in nature?

00:15:18 Victoria

I can't deny that that's where that's true.

00:15:21 Victoria

So I'm holding these two parts of my life separately.

00:15:24 Victoria

And so I use that time to dig into, you know, the sacred stories of of the Christian Church.

00:15:34 Victoria

To see, does it really say that you know that nature is something for us, something separate, something for us to use and to dominate and?

00:15:44 Victoria

And I found that it isn't.

00:15:46 Victoria

That every single spiritual leader from both testaments were sent into the wilderness, in fact compelled or drawn, or allured or pushed into the wilderness at a pivotal time in their own leadership and in their own history.

00:16:01 Victoria

What was happening in the culture.

00:16:02 Victoria

Sure, every one of them.

00:16:04 Victoria

And I tended to as a pastor say, oh, you know, "that was a dark night of the soul or they had some wrestling with inner critics or inner demons or whatever."

00:16:17 Victoria

Wait a minute.

00:16:18 Victoria

What role did the actual wilderness play in that in that call?

00:16:23 Victoria

You know, it's consistent.

00:16:24 Victoria

It's in every story.

00:16:26 Victoria

And so I started asking those questions.

00:16:28 Victoria

Then I found out that the word for wilderness in Hebrew, in the Old Testament, the word is Midbar.

00:16:36 Victoria

That's the Hebrew word. It's translated over 300 times in the Old Testament as wilderness. But if you look it up in a lexicon, you know which is the you know English Hebrew dictionary, basically if you look it up in a lexicon that word, the first definition is the organ which speaks.

00:16:55 Victoria

The organ which speaks is the second definition of wilderness.

00:17:00 Victoria

And that was like, "Oh my God, what," so the people are drawn into wilderness to listen to the organ which speaks the trees and the birds and the waters and the clouds and the rain and the snow, that that there is a sacred voice embedded in all of, in all of the wilderness.

00:17:20 Victoria

And so, however you imagine that, whether it's, the voice of God as something transcendent speaking through the trees to you, fine.

00:17:30 Victoria

I tend to now see that the voice of the sacred and the voice of the tree and the voice of my soul are kind of all in relationship at least, if not the same voice.

00:17:43 Victoria

And so there's something about this deep listening to wilderness that's deeply embedded in in my own spiritual tradition.

00:17:51 Victoria

So I still remain sort of on the inside edge.

00:17:54 Victoria

I don't, you know, I'm not comfortable in indoor churches.

00:17:58 Victoria

I'm not comfortable with most of the denominations or anything.

00:18:02 Victoria

But I still, it's like my tradition, it's where I where I belong.

00:18:07 Victoria

So I still regard myself being on the inside edge of the of the Christian tradition.

00:18:15 S Victoria

But...now I'm forgetting the point.

00:18:20 Victoria

What was that?

00:18:21 Alison

I think you made the point well enough that you can, yeah...

00:18:26 Victoria

And so, well, once I learned that, then it was like these are separate, these are falsely separated.

00:18:34 Alison

Right.

00:18:34 Victoria

You know and so how do I create?

00:18:36 Victoria

I tried to do it within the church.

00:18:38 Victoria

It just didn't go anywhere.

00:18:39 Victoria

There's so much resistance.

00:18:41 Victoria

And so it's like, I just, I can't.

00:18:42 Victoria

I need to do this.

00:18:43 Victoria

I need to make this up so when I left the church to start this, I didn't know of any other wild churches.

00:18:44 Alison

Right.

00:18:50 Victoria

And I just was like alright, I'm making this up, call it heresy if you want, but this is what you know needs to happen.

00:18:56 Victoria

And so, you know, it was interesting, 'cause a lot of the practices were like meeting in a circle, not in rows, that there's still leadership, but it's much more feminine leadership, it's more participatory or of a conversation.

00:19:10 Victoria

The wandering piece was, you know, more than half of the service.

00:19:15 Victoria

And you know, I really thought I was making it all up until I started meeting people like Sarah who also thought they were making it up.

00:19:24 Victoria

And it's really, you know, we were creating something at the same time in different places with different influences, you know, we've read different books or gone to different place, and that's when we started to meet each other.

00:19:37 Victoria

We started to go "Oh, wow. This is a thing."

00:19:40 Victoria

“Yeah, it's my own private deal that this is some work of spirit, whatever you want to call it.”

00:19:48 Victoria

That's happening.

00:19:49 Victoria

That's emerging.

00:19:50 Victoria

And so that's when we started the Wild Church network.

00:19:53 Victoria

But the wild church network was basically me finding other people and going, “Oh my gosh, you're doing this too, wait a minute.”

00:20:01 Victoria

So we started meeting monthly and after about nine months, we recognize that this was a thing and we needed a name for it.

00:20:13 Victoria

So we came up with Wild Church network, made a website and you know it's grown from there.

00:20:18 Victoria

So now it's in a different phase.

00:20:20 Victoria

Other people have heard about it through going to wild churches near them or through my book or whatever.

00:20:26 Victoria

And now it's next phase where we're creating more ways of interaction within the network, more ways of getting to learn about it, to engage, to engage with it, to connect with others.

00:20:44 Alison

Yeah, cool.

00:20:46 Alison

Yeah, out of my own curiosity, is it currently US? Just US based.

00:20:51 Victoria

No, there's quite a few in Canada, and there are a smattering of churches all over the world.

00:20:54 Alison

OK.

00:20:57 Victoria

In fact, this afternoon in an hour, Valerie, my sister who leads the Wild Church network, and myself are leading a six week Wild Church leadership course that will be offered 3 two more times next year.

00:21:14 Victoria

Sarah will be coming one of the weeks and sharing 'cause it's about stories.

00:21:19 Victoria

It's about hearing what others are doing and adapting it to your place and your own leadership style in your own history, in our community.

00:21:30 Victoria

It is the first time we've done it. It's time to to do that now.

00:21:34 Victoria

So there's people from Australia and Ireland and Indonesia and Germany that will be attending, you know, so there's churches all over the world actually, yeah.

00:21:48 Alison

Right, right.

00:21:50 Alison

So the next question, I think, t's optional because I'm not sure if you know, I know you spent some time in Scotland in Ireland, but I don't know if you wanted to, if that's more like something that was for, you know, that you'd like to keep to yourself or if it's relevant.

00:22:05 Victoria

Yeah, I mean, I don't have a lot to say about it, but, but I think some of it's relevant.

00:22:10 Victoria

I mean, I went there to co-lead a little pilgrimage on Iona?

00:22:15 Alison

OK.

00:22:16 Victoria

Iona in Scotland.

00:22:17 Victoria

And then I spent a month in a in a little island off of Northern Ireland and I also spent some time kind of going to the land of my ancestors in Scotland.

00:22:32 Victoria

And so it was a lot of just sort of like feeling being there like, there's some questions around what is it for me belonging to a place, how do we belong to place as a descendant of colonizers?

00:22:42 Alison

Right.

00:22:47 Victoria

As somebody who's moved a lot.

00:22:50 Victoria

As somebody who doesn't own a place doesn't belong to me.

00:22:54 Victoria

And so, that feels like a prerequisite to belong to place, you'd have to belong to you.

00:22:59 Victoria

And so asking those questions within the context included, how do you belong?

00:23:05 Victoria

What is ancestry?

00:23:07 Victoria

What role does that play?

00:23:09 Victoria

So those are some of the questions I'm holding. I don't have a lot of, you know, it's part of the next book that I'm writing.

00:23:16 Alison

Oh, that's exciting. Yeah.

00:23:20 Victoria

Yeah, and there's a lot of people who've been pushed out, you know, I'm in a year of sort of nomadic wandering, because I couldn't buy a house.

00:23:28 Victoria

Last year was the worst year ever to buy a house.

00:23:32 Victoria

All the rents went up.

00:23:34 Victoria

I couldn't afford to rent another place and you know, sort of individual to me, post pandemic, a lot of people are wanting to do workshops on wild spirituality.

00:23:44 Victoria

So, you know, I'm sort of following where I'm doing workshops this year.

00:23:48 Victoria

So I did a couple workshops in Ireland as well on wild spirituality.

00:23:52 Victoria

I don't know if you want to use that, but that's the answer.

00:23:56 Alison

OK.

00:23:58 Alison

Thank you.

00:23:59 Alison

And and then lastly, wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about your book Church of the Wild and what inspired you to share your knowledge and wisdom with a larger audience.

00:24:12 Victoria

Well, it was something that was that had been churning within me for many years.

00:24:19 Victoria

My sister and I talked about writing a book together, but it just never got to the forefront.

00:24:26 Victoria

It never became the thing.

00:24:28 Victoria

OK, I'm going to spend time and actually do this, and I'm sort of like that, I need deadlines.

00:24:33 Alison

Me too.

00:24:35 Victoria

And so, you know, actually an editor of a publisher contacted me when they followed the work that I had been doing with Wild church movement and said, "have you ever thought about writing a book?"

00:24:49 Victoria

It's like, yes.

00:24:50 Victoria

So it doesn't normally happen.

00:24:52 Victoria

It's almost like I don't want to talk about it.

00:24:54 Victoria

It's unusual, but that's how it happened for me.

00:24:57 Victoria

So she sort of, my editor, saw the vision for it and she had me come up with a proposal, which I did, and you know, the proposals are always different than the actual book because the book centers around my relationship with particular with deer.

00:25:17 Victoria

And a particular deer family became central in the book and that, I signed the contract before any of that happened.

00:25:25 Victoria

So a lot of the books sort of emerged as I was writing it and so it's my story as well as there's theology in it and there's some, you know, it's kind of putting together my story with the back story, kind of a lot of the stuff that we've talked about today.

00:25:41 Victoria

It gave me a chance to, sort of say all I needed to say.

00:25:45 Victoria

It's not something you can share in a, you know, in a few sentences or put on a website.

00:25:51 Alison

Right.

00:25:52 Victoria

So the book gave me the opportunity to kind of tell more of the story.

00:25:56 Victoria

So yeah, the next book besides the belonging to place book, but the next book is called a field guide to Church of the Wild.

00:26:05 Victoria

And so I'll be visiting different wild churches like yours to just kind of like tell the different stories of different ways of this, that the expression is emerging and share some of the practices because we keep getting more and more requests for that as more people are worrying about this.

00:26:05 Alison

OK.

00:26:22 Victoria

Wanting to start a church and yeah, there is no how-to, but there are stories and so telling those stories is what's there.

00:26:28 Alison

Yeah. Inspiration, yeah.

00:26:31 Alison

I love that.

00:26:32 Victoria

Yeah, yeah.

00:26:34 Alison

So thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me.

00:26:41 Victoria

Good luck, blessings on the on the magazine and all that you're doing and.

00:26:46 Alison

And best of luck with your new books that you're working on.

00:26:52 Victoria

I'm sure I'll come visit sometime. In November, December, I'll still help.

00:26:54 Alison

OK?

00:26:55 Victoria

I will be there.

00:26:57 Alison

Sounds good.

00:26:58 Victoria

Many blessings to you.

00:26:59 Alison

Alright, and I'll share the final fall magazine with you when it's ready.

00:27:04 Victoria

Thank you.

00:27:05 Victoria

I appreciate it.

00:27:06 Alison

Alright, thanks.