

Biography – Robert Newman

I was born in Memphis, Tennessee into rich traditions of the reformed faith; paternal leanings toward the Lutheran church while my mother's family bore the Presbyterian torch. The church affirmed God's claim on my life as I received infant baptism at Evergreen Presbyterian Church where my family attended from the early 60s and across the street from Rhodes College where various family members were educated.

My mom, older brother by ten and a half months, and I relocated to the hill top country of North Mississippi to the city of Olive Branch before I started school. My parents were divorced after my birth. My father was a transportation engineer, which he would say is just a fancy way of saying truck driver. He supported us well in his absence and his love was always present. At times, I sensed that he was more present for my brother and I more so than some of my friends' fathers. In our phone conversations my dad would always end our chats with a question, "What's the most important thing in your life?" to which my brother I would respond, "To put God first, and everything will fall into it's proper place." I will always carry this alongside other warm memories of my dad for the rest of my life.

At the age of 10, mom was diagnosed with melanoma which she fought, embraced recovery in remission, and continued treatment when it returned. She passed away in December 2000 when my brother was thirteen and I was twelve. She had gone back to college to become a teacher and was only one semester way from receiving a Bachelor of Education degree. Eight months later, my brother and I moved to boarding school. We matriculated at The Webb School in Bell Buckle, TN where I attended from eighth through twelve grade. I experienced a vibrant culture of diversity where distinctions between faith traditions grew from various Christian denominations to living and growing with people of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhist and Judaism traditions; people of all over the United States and the world. I enjoyed playing team sports year round; cross country in the fall, basketball in the winter, and lacrosse in the Spring.

Upon graduation, I attended the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi. During my four years of undergraduate education I, also, served as a counselor and senior staff at Hopewell Camp and Conference Center (St. Andrews Presbytery) for five summers where I heard clearer the calling to be a pastor. In this time I accepted a youth director position where I served for three years before seeking a MDiv at Columbia Theological Seminary. It was there that my sense of call to proclaim the Word, administer the sacraments, and provide pastoral care was strengthened by the study of languages (Hebrew and Greek) and a CPE internship. Before seeking a call to parish ministry and arriving in Coastal Carolina Presbytery, I completed a year-long residency as a CPE chaplain at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

The aspects of my life gifted by God that are most fruitful are my dog Hank, the great outdoors, a good biography, and a shared meal with others. My golden retriever Hank was born Easter Sunday in 2015 and he has been a great companion and dear light to me. Mainly due to his bathroom needs, I benefited from the fullness of the days God gives me by witnessing sunrises and sunsets. In the hours between, I enjoy taking the ol' boy on hikes where I let him off the leash and we can experience the freedom of open, fresh country and air. For the same reason that I feel called to journey with people in life, I am drawn to biography for the real world has in itself an abundance of excitement, joy, fear, surprise, and intrigue that doesn't require make up. However, I do not say this to put down fiction as I am still an avid fan of the Harry Potter series which was especially life giving while attending boarding school. I find it interesting that there are more references to food and eating in the New Testament than there are directly about love, so I seek food fellowship as a way of growing in deeper brotherly love for others.