

I grew up in Roanoke, Virginia in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. I was baptized Presbyterian, but my parents divorced when I was five and attended separate churches. Therefore, I never had a church home. When I was in 8th grade, I joined a community choir. It was through music that my faith deepened. From singing gospel to classical music, this was one of the first times I felt the Holy Spirit working through me and others.

I attended Emory & Henry College in Southwest Virginia. During my sophomore year, I was invited to sing at a local Presbyterian Church near campus, and I became involved and grew close to this church. I started doing more with the church by teaching classes and participating in leading worship. During my junior year, both my pastor and a professor began talking to me about the ministry and suggested Seminary. Between my love of scholarship, particularly studying the history of religion, and my love of serving others, I felt God calling me to Seminary. After graduation, the pastor at my mom's church in Roanoke, Raleigh Court Presbyterian, offered me a year internship. This ended up being like a field education, only before Seminary. It was during this year that I began dating my wife Elizabeth and we were engaged by that spring. Serving in this church was wonderful and it helped me in my discernment.

I began attending Princeton Theological Seminary in 2012. Seminary was a challenge, but also a wonderful experience. It is hard for me to think of any class that I did not enjoy, or at least experience much growth. Choir continued to be my spiritual anchor, as I sang in the chapel choir all three years. I got married after my first year, and Elizabeth moved to New Jersey with me. Learning to balance life as a married student was also very challenging but I am very thankful that I started learning how to do that in Seminary. One of my favorite aspects of Seminary was the Field Education experiences. I spent a summer doing CPE at a hospital in Trenton, New Jersey. Doing hospital chaplaincy helped me connect to God in a way that I had not done. It challenged my faith but also helped me see God working in the darkest moments of people's lives. I decided I was called to more chaplaincy.

After graduation, I moved to Wilmington in the summer of 2015 and did two years of hospital chaplaincy in a residency program at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. CPE was challenging, but much needed. I not only became a better listener of my patients, but also a better listener for the Holy Spirit working in my life. In ministering to the sick and dying, I felt a calling to have pastoral care be a part of my ministry in wherever I served. I began seeing those sad moments as holy moments and felt blessed to be invited into people's lives.

In January, I was asked to serve at First Presbyterian of Wilmington in a part-time capacity, with a pastoral care focus. It was here that I stopped exploring and truly found my calling. I remember one parishioner that had cancer. I went through the end-of-life process with her, seeing the suffering and the sadness that came with declining health, but also seeing the ultimate happiness and peacefulness that came with letting go and accepting death. It was hard for me to see her die, but both she and I knew that God would take care of her. I preached her funeral, which happened to be my first in the church. I sensed both the joy of a life well lived, assurance of life to come, and the sadness of having to say goodbye. It was after this that I truly felt a calling to church ministry. I am both humbled and blessed to be called as Interim Pastor of Christian Formation and Congregational Care, and I look forward to what God has in store for me in this calling.