

Becky Durham  
Biographical Information

I was raised in the First Presbyterian Church of Merrillville, IN. Church was the central part of my life growing up. I can name the trio of women who taught me about Jesus, starting in the preschool Sunday School room and making my way through the graded program to the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade room. I was confirmed and became a weekly attender of youth group activities in middle school and high school. I benefited from teachers and leaders who patiently guided and instructed me.

Around the time I would graduate high school in the spring of 1996, I was invited by my pastor to participate in a church trip he was leading in Israel. On that trip, the stories I had learned in the Sunday School rooms at my church became real in a way I had not considered. After spending an afternoon at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, I went back to my hotel room and opened the olive wood Bible I had bought for a friend. In the days before Google and my Biblical Studies degree, I had to thumb through pages in the gospels until I found the section I needed in John. I read the words about the crucifixion and about the post-resurrection encounters with Jesus that followed. As I read v. 31, "But these (words) are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name," I knew that I did believe this and that I wanted to follow Jesus from then on.

I went to college at the University of Evansville in the fall of 1996. I found a good group of friends who started a Bible Study in our dorm and encouraged me to join them for church and the campus Christian club that met on Friday nights. I grew in my faith and my understanding. In the spring of my sophomore year, I knew I was being called into youth ministry. I changed my major to religion with an emphasis in Biblical Studies and started preparing for ministry.

In the Spring of 2000, I began looking for a job in youth ministry. Applications everywhere, yet it was a Presbyterian church right across the Ohio River from my college that called me for an interview. Six days before graduation, the Rev. Dr. J. Douglas Blair's voice sounded a bit like the voice of God in my ear when he called to offer me the job at the Presbyterian Church of Henderson, KY. Eighteen years later, I continue to serve that church and the Presbytery of Western, Kentucky in youth and family ministry.

Always hungry for education, I eagerly accepted the opportunity to participate in the Presbytery's CRE program in 2004. As I learned about subjects relevant to being a pastor, something stirred in me that felt a bit like my biggest desire and my biggest fear, simultaneously. Yet, my family and I were not in a place to pursue the formal education that an MDiv would require. My husband, Jason, and I were raising a child in elementary school at the time. I finished the lay pastor program in May 2006 and continued to grow as a pastor by joining a discussion group of others who had graduated the program. I would continue to serve my church as Director of Youth and Family and finally become a CRE at that same church in May of 2015.

In April of 2013, I took a week to discern what was next. I silenced my phone, disconnected from the internet, and spent a week meeting with people who had mentored me, letting them speak honestly and pray for me. One of them suggested that I check out the distance MDiv offered by the University of Dubuque. I will graduate from that institution on May 19.

In my life, God has worked through a variety of people and experiences to prepare me for this day. I am grateful for the Henderson church members for walking alongside me since my days of marked inexperience in ministry and trusting me as I practiced leading and pastoring in a variety of circumstances. I am grateful for my family and my circle of friends and mentors who encourage me and nudge me onward, even on the most difficult days. I am grateful for the faculty and classmates at my seminary who teach me and push me to learn and grow and be prepared for faithful ministry. I am grateful to the gracious, loving, patient, persevering God who continues to speak to and lead me. I am looking forward to serving God and God's Church as a Minister of Word and Sacrament.