

My decision to pursue becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament is not a completely new calling, but a continuation of the call I have lived into for thirty years.

After a childhood of attending church only on Christmas Eve, with the occasional Vacation Bible School thrown in, I came to a personal faith in Christ as a teenager. This happened in part by responding to a call at a Billy Graham Crusade. While I would no longer subscribe to the strictly evangelical faith all of this implies, it is a foundation for which I am grateful. These steps led to involvement in a small Methodist church where I felt deeply cared for and a foundation in reading Scripture and praying.

Intellectual rigor was a strong element in my faith from the beginning. When I reached college and discovered a campus ministry that engaged in deep inductive Scripture study and whole life discipleship, my faith thrived. A few years out of college, I answered the call to work in campus ministry.

Throughout my time in campus ministry, I was drawn to who wasn't in the room or didn't have a voice at the table. John chapter 1:14 tells us that Jesus came to live among us, full of grace and truth. Ministry is at its best when we "move into the neighborhood" (MSG). My students were often drawn to just grace or truth, when we are called to image Jesus by showing both. Sometimes we need to be pulled toward hard truths, like facing systemic racism and rampant economic injustice. Sometimes we need to be pulled toward grace, like my ministry with fraternity and sorority students, toward whom the very religious students could be judgmental.

Over time, the desire to work with who was not in the room and to be a person of grace and truth increasingly drew me toward LGBTQ students. This led to a painful parting with that campus ministry and the beginning of working for a church in a progressive denomination. I work within and deeply value the established church, but I also know it is not always about bringing people into *our* room and table. Often, we need to leave our space and earn the right to be in community spaces; to come alongside a group of people and help them build a “table fellowship” of their own. I love our commitment to New Worshiping Communities and learned a lot from my internship with the Slate Project.

I continue to love and value all of these things: to minister within the church, to grow in grace and openness toward those who are not in the room; to move outside of the existing church to build fresh expressions; and to help all of us love and grow in unity in Jesus. From the start of my seminary journey, I felt a call to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament. In the last year, I have increasingly felt drawn to pastor a small church - again in that balance of caring for an existing congregation and reaching beyond the walls of the church into the community. My internship at Chestnut Grove this summer confirmed that call.