

Spiritual Autobiography  
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Someone once told me that if you can find the “thin red thread” in scripture of what its central message is for you, you will always have something to hold onto in the midst of any doubts or questions. Throughout my faith journey, I have found that my “thread” is the love of God for all of us and our call to love one another. I see God in the beauty and complexity of creation and in the fundamental goodness and humanity I believe can be found in all. Over and over again in life, I find myself coming back to these basic principles, whether in times of heartache or of joy.

Growing up Presbyterian, I found a home in the church. I loved the liturgy and the tradition, and I learned the importance of giving back to the community. I got involved in every aspect of the church that I could, and I discovered a deep sense of calling and connection with God through the sacrament of communion. In both serving the elements as a Ruling Elder and receiving them as a part of the congregation, I felt connected to God and to the mystery of the incarnation. Looking back, then, it seems natural that I first felt my sense of call as a high school student while taking communion at Montreat Youth Conference. I felt a call to serve others and to ministry—this sense of call, though, felt scary and uncertain as I began discerning what it might mean for my life.

Throughout college, I began wrestling with this sense of call and with who I was meant to be as a person of faith. I attempted to try out different avenues for service, hoping that one might be a fit. Up to this point, faith had felt fairly easy. I might have had questions, but I trusted God and my community to live faithfully and treat one another well.

It was my year as a Young Adult Volunteer that brought about a new complexity to my faith. I struggled with questions about justice and theodicy, wondering how the God of goodness and love—a God I believe to always be just—would allow the suffering I witnessed on a daily basis in my work with those experiencing homelessness. The year also made me begin questioning the church and how we work in the world. If we are called to love and serve one another, why do we live in a world full of stereotypes and allow our justice system to be set up against those who need its help the most? And what is the church doing about it? I also, though, saw God’s love at work more deeply than I had ever before in the community that engulfed those with whom I was working. Amidst the deep sorrow of the world, there was true joy and hope.

This new questioning and exploring is what finally convinced me to follow the call to seminary. Throughout this time, my faith was both questioned and deepened as I learned to wrestle with the unknown, all while going back to that “thread.” I met people with fundamentally different theologies than my own and discovered a renewed passion for seeing the sacred in the everyday. I found deep and profound beauty in nature and in the complexity of human bodies and communities. And I learned the importance of being brave and following God’s call.

It was this call that led me to work as the Director of Mission and Outreach at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin. This congregation is full of energy and hope while also asking deep questions about how we interact with our community. I see God at work in new ways: in how children feel at home in the church, in how a shared table can make all feel welcome, and in how a community can act bravely to show up for our neighbors. My faith is strengthened every day as I see new life in the church, both congregationally and in the world.

I have faith today that God is at work in the world through each of us. We are called to love deeply and fully. This love is not always easy, but through the grace of Christ we continue to learn and grow together. This “thread” of how God loves us and how we are called to love one another guides me through moments of uncertainty and of strength. I am excited to continue this journey, growing closer to God and practicing a life of faithful service.