

Kelsey Holderman

Biographical Statement

I am a current student at Princeton Theological Seminary, where I am seeking dual Masters degrees in Divinity and Christian Education Formation. Formerly from Dublin, Ohio, I grew up in a family of seven, who inspired my love of the outdoors, Ohio State athletics, and country music, and who have been constant sources of encouragement and guidance throughout my faith journey and recent call to ministry. Before seminary, I attended The Ohio State University, earning a bachelor's degree in Middle Childhood Education, and then went on to earn a MCE Master's degree at the same university, where I spent the year teaching seventh grade Math and Science in Columbus Public Schools. While I love, and have always loved teaching, I have recently found myself in the world of youth ministry and have spent the past two and a half years discerning God's call on my life to full-time pastoral ministry.

Statement of Call

Ever since the age of five, my goal in life was to be a teacher. At that age, teaching appealed to me because I loved school myself, and had wonderful experiences in school. As I grew into a teenager and a young adult, that passion for teaching young people grew and developed into more than just teaching but impacting young people's lives in a meaningful and positive way. Around the time that I started my teacher training program in college, I also started serving in youth ministry for the first time. I found myself investing a significant amount of time in the lives of the youth at the church, and I quickly discovered how much I enjoyed building relationships with them, helping them work through difficult parts of their lives, challenging them to think about and experience their faith in numerous ways, and serving alongside them on mission trips and in their own community. Not only did I begin to recognize gifts in myself that fit well into serving in youth ministry, but I was simultaneously challenged in my theology and felt God's nudge to listen to the questions and passions I had brewing inside of me. That nudge turned into a push, and with support from my church, family and many friends, I began taking steps towards following this call; the first step being seminary.

When I started attending Princeton Theological Seminary, I believed that my goal was to learn how to become a well-informed, well trained youth pastor. While this is still a goal and product of my education, I have also become more theologically aware and attune to human and earthly needs that go beyond young people. There is a tension in the Christian faith where the same scriptures are used to oppress and liberate others, but it is our duty as followers of Christ to recognize where people groups are being marginalized, and to take action. This includes but is not limited to people of color, women, those who identify as LGBTQI+, people experiencing homelessness, disability or mental illness, elderly people, young

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Statement of Call continued

people, and the list continues. It is not always my place to enter into the struggle of a people group with the intention of "saving" them from their oppression, but it is necessary that I take steps to recognize and change the ways I participate in oppression, even subconsciously, to learn from others, and to work alongside them so that they have support and an advocate, but also keep their dignity and agency. I am learning what it means to love people better, and that is what I am called to do.

One of the other ways that I recognize God shaping my sense of call through my studies and experiences while in seminary is the constant reminder that not all practices done in God's name are truly of God, and seemingly harmless words, decisions or actions can be harmful in the faith development of all people. It is essential that I continue to think theologically about every decision I make in ministry; whether it be in teaching the Bible or planning for mission work, but it is equally important to remain open to learning from those with whom I am doing ministry, as well as remain humble enough to allow God to change my heart and mind.

During the past two years of my life, my experiences of God and other people have awoken a deep desire in me to love others in liberating and meaningful ways. My talents and passions are still heavily geared towards ministry with young people, but I have learned that good youth ministry is just good ministry, and it works the other way around as well. I know that God is calling me to be a leader in the church, to help guide, love, empower, and nurture faith in and with God's people, and I am prepared to do the work to prepare me to follow that call well.