



Laura Colee Autobiography — July 2018

Hailing from the Midwest, I grew up infrequently attending church with my family. It was not until high school that faith became an important part of my life. When I was 16 years old, I attended a Methodist summer camp in Eastern Illinois. In a matter of just three days at the camp, I found myself abruptly waking up to God's presence in my life. More than anything else, it was God's sacrificial love through his son Jesus Christ that most resonated with me. These first hours of faith continue to be a source of truth and comfort for me today. After camp, I joined a PCUSA church, studied the Bible, and began teaching others what I believed.

I completed my undergraduate degree at Northwestern University where I double majored in History and Religious Studies. I found myself drawn to a variety of Religious Studies classes—everything from Christian Mystical Theology to Theories of Religion. I also particularly loved my Jewish History courses and wrote an honors thesis in History on the Christian response to a 17th century Jewish pseudo-Messiah. Between my junior and senior years, I worked as a Children Ministries Intern at Second Presbyterian Church in Bloomington, Illinois.

After college, I attended Princeton Theological Seminary, which allowed me to integrate my academic passions with my love of the Church. At PTS, I focused my studies on Hebrew Bible and Women's Studies and received the Senior Fellowship in Old Testament and a certificate in Women's Studies. In my Senior Thesis, I explored Biblical descriptions of reproductive loss, particularly in the Prophets, and the Church's role in caring for those affected by miscarriage, infertility, and infant mortality. At PTS, I worked as a Teaching Assistant for the Introductory to Biblical Hebrew course. I also participated in a course trip to Israel-Palestine and then later served on a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation to Israel-Palestine. I completed one of my field education placements at Womanspace in Mercer County as a Student Chaplain. I completed another field education placement at Broad Street Ministry as a Pastoral Associate in Residence. Where previously in my life I assumed I would become a Biblical Scholar, it was at BSM that I first felt a call to become a pastor.

After seminary, I completed a Modern Hebrew summer language program at the University of Haifa in Haifa, Israel and served as an AmeriCorps volunteer at Crisis Ministry in Trenton, New Jersey. I also completed an intensive training program to become a Mercer County Domestic Violence Victim Response Team and Sexual Assault Services Advocate.

Starting in August 2013, I had the opportunity to teach the *Nature and Meaning of the Old Testament* course at Eastern University for three years. In September 2013, I began working as the Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield, New Jersey. In March 2017, I was ordained at the Interim Associate Pastor at FPC Haddonfield. During my five years at FPC, I have led the Adult Education program, the children's Sunday School program, the Youth Mission Trip, Vacation Bible School, and Confirmation Class. I've also had the opportunity to preach regularly at FPC and fall in love with process of proclaiming the gospel.

My partner Eric Zrinsky and I were married in October 2016. We currently reside in the Port Richmond neighborhood of Philadelphia with our beloved dog Frankie. Eric has BA in English and a certificate in Writing from Drexel University and an MFA in Creative Writing from Rutgers University. He plays guitar and bass guitar in two Philadelphia-area bands. Earlier this year, I tried my hand at stand-up comedy through the Helium Comedy Club class. This July, I will be traveling to Malawi in Southeast Africa to work with and preach for the Urban Promise International Summit.

As a pastor, I feel drawn to working with communities who embrace change and transformation. To me, the Gospel is inherently subversive and therefore I believe the Church is called to the process of subverting human culture and power structures. I believe God's Spirit is constantly forming and reforming the Church and asking us to engage with the world in new and fresh ways. I feel called to walk alongside congregations as they identify what is important to them, honor the wisdom of their church tradition, and seek to serve God in the modern world