

Glenn Zuber

## Journey of Faith

Since high school, I've struggled to find a religion of the heart that also satisfies the demands of my mind. I think many people in our society struggle with this tension today and finding a community that affirms the value of that tension is difficult. One of my friends recently posted a quote on their Facebook page that captured this sentiment perfectly: "churches today are either intelligence on ice or ignorance on fire." I think that the founders of Princeton Seminary struggled to resolve this paradox when they decided to create a theological school that united the "piety of the heart...with solid learning."

I grew up in a Disciples of Christ church in Southern California where the preacher saw his primary purpose every week to bring his audience to repentance and conversion. The Disciples started as a frontier, evangelistic offshoot of the Presbyterian Church in the 1810s, and my home church clearly reflected those origins. The simplicity of my home church's Reformed beliefs and sacraments recalled Zwingli's theology. The preaching was dynamic, inspiring, and accessible, but the sermons often sounded similar to each other. In high school, my youth minister led my high school group through a training seminar with Tony Campolo materials. That proved to be a turning point in my life. Campolo was the first Christian speaker who presented a conception of faith that went beyond personal "obedience" to the Bible's commands or conversation. Through his vivid stories, I encountered an example of someone living out his faith by helping people in Haiti, challenging unjust economic practices of First-world corporations, and having deep conversations with non-Christian intellectuals in the academy. I still admire Tony Campolo's dynamic version of Christian faith, and I think he's a great model for many thoughtful people interested in creative, compassionate, outward-focused ministry.

After high school, I attended a number of different kinds of Reformed denominations, including Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian (USA), and United Church of Christ. Two of these churches were predominantly African-American as I discovered that I resonated with how mainline African-American congregations combine a thoughtful interpretation of the Bible with a passionate embrace of Christ as the living hope of Humanity. For graduate school, I attended three seminaries, a Disciples' seminary (M.A.R.), Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div.), a German Protestant seminary (exchange program), and I concluded with a Ph.D. at Indiana University—Bloomington in the area of American Studies/North American Religions. It was at Princeton Seminary that I met my wife. Right now, she is now an ordained PC (USA) minister and the former Presbyterian Representative to the U.N. for the PC (USA).

One of my latest chapter in my faith emerges from my calling to build an alternative, interracial Christian community in downtown DC for young adults and young couples who have dropped out of church. I believe that we live in a post-Christian, postmodern society where church leaders will have to "recontextualize" the gospel at a basic level for emerging generations. My community sponsored theology pubs, book signings, fellowship dinners, and an occasional joint holy day service with a local Presbyterian church.

There are two reasons I value my ordination in the PC (USA). First, I've found in the PC (USA) a community that helps people combine spiritual yearnings, missional outreach, and solid theological reflection. Second, I've found a creative circle of ministry partners in NextChurch, 1,001 Worshipping Communities programs, and other programs. For these reasons and many others I am flourishing as a minister in the life and mission of the PC (USA).