



Bryson City UMC has been selected to host a Duke intern again this summer. Meet Taylor Smith from Abilene, TX as he shares his faith journey:

I was raised in the United Methodist Church where I witnessed God’s love through my congregation’s patience when I did not always “get it right,” through their support and encouragement of my call into ordained ministry, and through the humbling experience of serving. Likewise, while in high school, I began discerning a call into ministry.

Upon arriving at McMurry, I found my niche as a religion major and began devoting myself to my studies, especially my courses in religion. I began to see a connection between my theological education and my spiritual life. Taking a course on women in the Bible, I began contemplating conceptions of biblical authority and the ways in which ideology shaped the writing of scripture and, in turn my interpretation of scripture. I began to recognize that my perception of truth has been shaped dramatically by centuries of church tradition. The growing awareness of how much I still have to learn inspired a greater passion for theological inquiry. As I wrestled with my life’s calling, I began to seek opportunities for ministry.

I had always been heavily involved with church activities, but often failed to see the purpose behind my service. Combining my passion for theological inquiry and academic discipline, I began to learn how to manage my time and stay organized, ultimately cultivating leadership skills. I applied for internships with youth programs and church camps, becoming immersed in ministry settings and church leadership roles. Seeing transformation in my youth, I became more comfortable in my role as a spiritual leader. I now serve as the Youth Director for Clyde FUMC; my faith is transformed daily as I witness the Holy Spirit working through the youth leadership council and in the midst of families overcoming obstacles, such as divorce, cancer, or death.

On campus, I’ve remained involved with McMurry’s Religious Life Community. Chapel, being a vital part of my spiritual formation, provided a welcoming place for me to worship with other students in similar life-stages. I began serving on the Chapel Design Team, attempting to create an inclusive place for McMurry’s denominationally diverse students to worship God, thereby cultivating my leadership skills as a worship planner. Off campus, I have spent the past two years helping raise funds for a mission in Juarez, Mexico which runs an affordable medical clinic and builds cinderblock homes for the needy—the realization of how much I have in relation to the less-fortunate has fueled my passion to advocate for social justice.

These activities and the relationships I formed in them have been transforming my heart, shaping my mind, and affirming my call into ordained ministry. I am scheduled to be certified as a candidate for ordination as an Elder in the United Methodist Church in the North Texas Conference in February 2014. As I have been preparing essays for my interview, I have recognized that God has been relentlessly present in my life, cultivating my mind for ministry, affirming my ability to lead, and transforming me into a disciple who attempts to follow God wherever I am called.

