

Marissa Zatezalo Carver – Biographical Statement – August 29, 2023

My name is Marissa Zatezalo Carver and I currently serve as the Associate Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Second Presbyterian Church in Lexington, KY. I completed my Master of Divinity at Columbia Theological Seminary in December 2021, and I am an Inquirer in the PC-USA, working towards ordination. I am 30 years old, originally from a small town just outside of Pittsburgh, PA, and I now live in Versailles, KY with my husband, Martin, our one-year-old son, Thomas, and our sweet but needy cat, Minska. I am the youngest of three and have been involved in church life in one capacity or another for most of my life. As a child and teenager, I was part of the Church of the Nazarene, and I attended Asbury University, a small, liberal arts college that was formerly Methodist and while non-denominational now, still has strong Methodist theology.

My faith was always incredibly important to me, and after graduating college, I served as a missionary for a year in Kyiv, Ukraine working with university students in various English ministries. While serving, I felt a strong but sure call to attend seminary, and I began researching where to go. At the time, the only call I was sure of was the call to seminary, but I trusted that God would continue to reveal next steps as needed.

I stumbled upon Columbia Theological Seminary quite by accident, and once home from Ukraine, I visited and knew this was where I needed to be. I came to seminary a bit disillusioned with certain elements of the church world I had grown up in, but not disillusioned enough to leave church entirely. I came to seminary very much in the process of deconstructing my faith, and I spent those three years reading, studying, praying, and hoping...trying to rebuild and re-understand what I believe.

In this process, I deeply appreciated the wisdom of my professors and loved getting to learn more about the denomination that is the P.C.(USA). I came to Columbia knowing nothing of this denomination or of Reformed Theology in general, and it was such a joy and a healing process to learn all that I have. As I took classes and engaged with various people and churches in the Atlanta area, my call to ministry and call to be ordained became clearer and clearer until I finally accepted it and began the process of following that call. I took the necessary steps to become an Inquirer on the ordination tract, officially becoming an Inquirer in May of 2022.

In August of 2022, my husband took a call at Hunter Presbyterian Church in Lexington, KY, so we relocated to just outside of Lexington, where I quickly found my current position at Second Presbyterian. After spending more time in Lexington and getting to know pastors in the presbytery of Transylvania, I felt that it would be important and meaningful to change my presbytery of care to the Presbytery of Transylvania, where I could continue to build relationships and have more in-person connections as I continue on in this process. I am excited to have been officially welcomed under care of the CPM in Transylvania just last week!

At this point, I am still hoping to be ordained in the P.C.(USA) and hoping to work in a church, loving God's people in whatever place God leads me to. Throughout all of the turmoil that I have felt in these last few years, I have never wavered on the belief that God is active and God is moving, and I deeply hope to join in.