

BIOGRAPHY AND FAITH JOURNEY FOR DONALD P. HAMMOND

My mother and I came to the San Francisco Bay Area from White Plains NY in 1970, or 1971; it's a bit hazy for everyone but for different reasons. We lived in the Good Earth Commune in the Haight-Ashbury before moving north to the Mayacamas mountains between the Sonoma and Napa valleys. I lived in a variety of places in Sonoma County but graduated from Analy High in Sebastopol in 1986. I earned a bachelor's degree in World & Comparative Literature from San Francisco State University and worked for about eight years in corporate communications with Wells Fargo Bank before moving to Arizona and working as a Web Content Producer for the Arizona Daily Star newspaper at the turn of the millennium.

I came to faith as an adult after finding no fulfillment in the ways of the world and in the philosophies that insisted that true contentment was predicated on material success and the accumulation of money and influence. I was raised in a family of countercultural libertines who took up the call to "Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out." Respectfully, I searched for a different way, and as a child of the late 20th century I followed many spiritual fads as well as some ancient religious traditions. I looked at things with an open mind and hoped that through my search I could connect with some transcendent, Divinely inspired truth. It was in my 30s that I made the conversion from a mélange of New Age spiritual beliefs to a charismatic Christian faith while I was living in Tucson. I attended a home-cell church which was essentially an iteration of the "Word of Faith" movement, popular in some mega-churches. It combined elements of the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" and pentecostalism. Within a short time of my conversion I was traveling around East Africa, Mexico, parts of Europe, and the east coast of the United States as an itinerant preacher and evangelist.

Within a few years I found that my natural affinity for social justice, hunger for the critical study of Scripture, and for mission projects that actually uplifted the whole lives of people and communities and not just their faith, was pulling me far afield from the goals of my original ministry partners. My Hippie childhood informed my progressive stance on social issues and politics. The ministry which I was a part of was unconcerned with the lives of people and focused solely on eschatological hope. They tended to equate faith only with charismatic gifts and understood justification to be a reward of faithfulness and not the free gift of God's grace. I found a great disconnect as the ministry focused on love of God but ignored love of neighbor.

I continued to study Scripture, to seek Christ, to understand the Gospel, and I wrestled with my faith and my limited understanding of the diversity of Christian witness. Sometime in 2004 I began to search for an environment where I could study the history and the traditions of the church and to examine questions of faith with critical tools in concert with the disciplines of reason. This led me to discover the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. I enrolled and affiliated with San Francisco Theological Seminary based more on its locale in Marin than anything else. It turned out to be Providential as it was there that I discovered Reformed theology and was both surprised and gratified to find that it resonated deeply with me. It was after I enrolled in seminary that I embarked on a path towards ordination with the PC(USA). I was a member under care at First Pres Berkeley, a seminary intern at Calvary in SF, and through SFTS was blessed to preach and worship with many churches in both Redwoods and San Francisco Presbyteries. I was ordained by the SF Presbytery to a validated call at SFTS in the recruitment office. In 2014 I discerned a call to intentional interim ministry and transferred to the Boston Presbytery where I was the interim for two churches in succession. In 2018 I transferred to the Presbytery of Long Island where I took up my third interim position. In addition to the two weeks of interim training with our denomination, I have also taken additional continuing education with the Interim Ministry Network (www.imnedu.org), of which I am a member. I continue to consider my call to intentional interim ministry to be the right fit for me. While I maintain a firm belief that the Body of Christ finds manifold expression within a variety of denominations, I also affirm my understanding of the unique and vital role of the PC(USA) in particular, and my call to serve within it.