

“Seminary allowed me to be prepared
to receive people’s trust.”



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REV. DR. NICHOLAS YODA

For most of his young life, Rev. Dr. Nicholas Yoda was unsure of his path – until his parents cornered him and implored him to choose. He told them he was going to be a pastor, and to this day, he still isn't sure why he said it. The amazing Presbyterian youth program in his home church must have had some impact.

Yoda credits voicing a plan as life-changing. “From that moment, people began to open conversation, discernment and doors.”

At that time, Yoda was a student at Berry College, near his hometown of Marietta, Georgia. He then attended Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga. It was the year between his second and third years of seminary, when he did a year-long internship at his home church, that he began to understand the true value of his theological education.

“That’s where the rubber hit the road for me,” Yoda says. “I learned to do ministry, and what ministry was about. I learned that my gifts and skills did match my vocational calling. I came back to my last year at Columbia in a very different place.”

In his last year of seminary, Yoda embraced the experience as an opportunity to grow in faith and emotional maturity. “I had to come to grips that people were going to trust me with incredible questions that couldn’t be answered by John Calvin or by reading a particular bible verse,” Yoda says. “As a pastor, people were going to take me seriously as the spiritual docent in a house full of wonder and a valley full of pain. Seminary allowed me to be prepared to receive that trust.”

Yoda was ordained in 1998, and is serving in his third call as head of staff at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati. He credits the pastors and Presbyterian leaders who mentored him along the way with giving him the opportunity to lead and guiding him along the way, and he’s grateful. “If you’re looking for the ah-ha moment, it’s just not there,” Yoda says. “It was looking in the rearview mirror and seeing, ‘Oh, that’s where the thin place is, that’s where the fingerprints of God are.’”

In the decades to come, Presbyterians will continue to give thanks for how pastors guided them. Future Presbyterians will be grateful to you for supporting our Presbyterian seminaries.

For more information

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