

**Q: When did you first realize you wanted to work in the faith community?**

A: I was 16 and serving in Appalachia as part of a work camp experience. I was on an all-guys work team. We were repairing the foundation of a home and needed to take part of the foundation out before we could pour a new one. There was this giant sledgehammer sitting there, and I was told to wait until the guys came back to start. But I basically bothered the senior pastor into letting me get started without them. I can be pretty persistent about things. I picked the sledgehammer up, and I felt something surge inside of me. This huge piece of foundation fell away. I fell to the ground, and I knew I didn't swing that by myself. That's how God got my attention. It's been one confirmation and conversation after another that's led me to where I am now.

**Q: What's kept you going?**

A: I'm not sure there's anything more exciting than observing people understand God's love for them—and the profound effect of wanting to live out that love in the world. I love being a companion with people on a spiritual journey, wherever they are. I just don't think it gets better than that.

**Q: What have you wrestled with—and how has the church answered?**

A: When I was ten years old, my mom was in a terrible car crash, which resulted in my grandmother's death and my mother suffering severe injuries that still impact her life today. It was the first pivotal storm in my life. During the anger, fear and pain of that, the church gave me the gift of lament, of taking our pain, suffering and brokenness before God in community. And a space for asking questions with tear-stained faces and remembering that we don't suffer alone. No one tried to "fix" things but instead held space to be wrapped in love, prayer and hope. For me, the practice of lament is healing and authentic and hopeful and relational because on days when we can't go on or find words or just feel in the dark, there are other people who sing and pray and hope on our behalf.

**Q: You and your husband moved to the Short North to prepare to open this church. What about the neighborhood inspires you?**

A: I love how diverse it is, the inclusive spirit I experience here. I love being in an arts district. To be in an area where creativity is celebrated will make for a dynamic and vibrant expression of church. Whatever medium it is—whether it's music, art, photography—God speaks to us in ordinary life. Scripture and certain rituals are sacred, and yet I think you can hear a Lady Gaga song and say God is speaking to me in this. Faith isn't something that just happens on Sunday morning. The more we connect what's happening out in the world into the church, the better. I hope the faith community is singing Lady Gaga AND Kendrick Lamar AND the hymns of John Wesley. We live false dichotomies a lot. It's all about breaking down some of the barriers that keep communities divided, and this is a place that is poised for that just by the nature of what the neighborhood looks like. I'm interested in unification and not gentrification.

**Q: How will Short North Church play a role in that?**

A: When it comes to the actual space, we want to be generous. It's a multipurpose space, so we want it to be used for more than a couple hours on Sunday. We want it to be a place for community dialogue, theater and music—and in ways that can really engage the community. We want to provide space for people to live out who God's created them to be and their passions in a way where it's a blessing for the neighborhood. Also, we want to talk about the issues that matter—gun violence, racism. We're committed to being a church that talks about those things and has a response to that because we love Jesus and justice is important.

**Q: It's particularly important to you that this church be an advocate for justice and a place for people of all backgrounds. Why?**

A: I believe diversity is a gift, and it needs to be celebrated. When it comes to violence, hunger and hate, the church has a way to say that's not OK and there's another way—and to say it in a way that seeks to build relationships. We want to engage in dialogue and action in a way that treats people with dignity and respect. Everybody is worthy of love, respect and belonging. If God created you, you're worthy of that. Period.

**Q: What challenges is the church facing?**

A: There are a lot of wounds that have been created in the name of the church. There's skepticism about religious leaders, and many times this is warranted. I think sometimes the church has had its head in the sand, so people think the church is irrelevant. For Short North Church, the commitment is to talking about things that make a difference and wanting to provide unconventional and relevant worshipping opportunities. Sometimes we're still doing church as if it's not 2017. And that's not to say there aren't practices that stand the test of time, but we haven't always kept current. People ask, "Why do I want to be a part of organized religion?" But when the church is at its best, it can make waves such as when we work together around hurricane relief. The United Methodist Committee on Relief is one of the best recovery arms. Because of how we are connected, we're able to work with people on the ground and mobilize. Every dollar goes to relief. When the church is at its best, God can use it to work miracles. It has the potential to do incredible good. We've seen love alive, and I believe it's still possible.

**Q: Why should those who are skeptical of church life give Short North Church a try?**

A: If you're questioning, pay attention to that. I get it. It's OK to be nervous. We want to be a community that welcomes questions and asks a lot of them. But it's about each person finding their own story and claiming that. We can learn things from one another's stories, but we have to listen. We're each on our own journey, so know that some people will have been on a 40-year journey of faith and others are just getting their feet wet. If you're not sure, you're not alone in that. This isn't a place where you have to be sure before you enter the doors. We're always going to go through seasons of asking questions and having doubts, and that's OK. Come—and know that you'll be welcomed.

**Q: You're currently in yoga teacher training. What's the goal?**

A: I'd love to offer a worship experience that is inspired by yoga breath and movement. How do we have an embodied worship experience, where we talk about loving God with our whole self? In a world where attentions spans are short, sitting and listening isn't always possible. I hope to have a worship experience where people come on their mats and experience worship in a way where they move and feel moved by the experience.

**Q: Outside of yoga—favorite hobbies?**

A: I love being outside. My husband and I like to run. I like to bike, especially for food. We like kayaking. I love a good cup of coffee with girlfriends. We love to travel. I love to cook. I love to eat delicious food. I do love to read.

**Q: What's on your nightstand right now?**

A: I just read part of an anatomy book for yoga (laughing). One of my favorites is *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd. I like a lot of stuff by Brene Brown. I've got *Dreamland* on my nightstand right now. It's about the opiate epidemic.

**Q: What else do you want people to know?**

A: I think God is moving in this neighborhood in incredible ways, and we want to be a church that steps into that. I don't think we're bringing God into the neighborhood—I think God is already here. Also, this is an adventure. If you would have told me a year ago that I'd be doing this, I would have said, "You're nuts." I'm learning, and if people are interested in being a part of a church that wants to take risks and try new things and celebrate creativity, then give us a try.