

The COLUMBIA Annual Fund



EMILY MARTIN
M.DIV. 2008

August 31, 2005

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COLUMBIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

701 Columbia Drive
P.O. Box 520
Decatur, GA 30031

Dear XXXXX

Happy new (school) year, and greetings from the 2005 Greek School Class at Columbia Theological Seminary. We've come here from all over, with at least one very important thing in common: God has called each of us to serve Christ's church and has sent us here to prepare for this journey. We'll depend on God and on one other as we travel together.

We will also depend on you. I'd like to share my own story so you can see one example of how God is working through students here at Columbia—and how you can help us.

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, USA. I was always active: reading Scripture, joining my presbytery's youth council, even attending national events like the youth legislative assembly. But my activity was as much motivated by my "achiever" personality as it was by any spiritual experience or conviction.

All this changed at the 2000 General Assembly, where I was a youth delegate. It was here, during a single moment, that I felt God calling me to a lifelong spiritual journey and to ministry in the church.

It didn't seem like a life-changing incident at first: I just shook the hand of a demonstrator outside the assembly. I had intended only to show support for some individuals who had clearly suffered deeply. Yet when I shook the first demonstrator's hand, I kept hearing Jesus' words, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me." As I looked into his face, it was as if Christ were saying, "Here I am. What are you going to do about it?"

I was shaken to my core. Tears welled up, and I began to cry. I went into worship stunned and disoriented. "Okay God," I said, "I hear you. All right? I hear you."

Since then, I've led a number of Bible studies and discussion series for youth and adults. I've traveled to South Africa on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to explore the Church's response to HIV/AIDS. I've shared those experiences with a number of schools and churches, and I'm trying to encourage dialogue that will help people connect Scripture to current issues in new ways.

These experiences have taken me far away, but Columbia brought me back home to the South. Columbia will give me the chance to study with professors already familiar to me, such as Rodger Nishioka, Brian Wren, and Walter Brueggemann. But seminary is not just about academics. Reading Scripture has challenged me to step out of my comfort zone and enter into relationship with those who will change me and be changed by me. Columbia has a reputation for being one of the best places to prepare for ministry. I can't think of anywhere better suited for this part of my journey in life and in ministry.

I hope that you'll help us on our journeys to ministry. Your gift of XXXXX to the Columbia Annual Fund will provide scholarships to students, support our teachers, and help the seminary meet day-to-day expenses as the faculty and staff prepare us for the work ahead.

Thank you for all the ways you already support us through your prayers and through your gifts. Blessings to you on your own journey,

Emily Martin
M.Div., Class of 2008



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