

## CHARLIE HAMILL FELT CALLED TO MINISTRY WHILE TENDING BAR

After graduating from college, Charlie Hamill—senior M.Div. student at PTS—spent his time partying, socializing, and in general forgetting any purposeful established education that he had received. For more than a decade he worked as a bartender in Missouri. It was during a conversation with a regular patron that Charlie first felt the call to ministry.

During his years tending bar, Charlie moved away from God. He had not forgotten about God in general, but had entered into his “dark night of the soul”. Yet, in a way that God is true to those who know God, who are baptized in God, and who from time to time lose sight of God, God was faithful to Charlie and was made evident to him once again.



Upon serving the regular patron his non-alcoholic beer, he began to tell Charlie about his recent trip to Switzerland. “I distinctly remember two things about that night: First, I had heard this story before but had never really paid attention, and second, now I was paying attention and something felt like it was tugging at my heart and mind. “After hearing the story again, Charlie asked for the web address for the place where the man had visited—Labri.org. He immediately left the bar and searched the site. After reading the short description, Charlie recalls: “I found tears in my eyes, a weakness in my body, and strength somewhere in my soul telling me that that which I was searching for had begun to evolve into reality, finally. I knew I was going to Switzerland, I knew I was leaving Missouri after 13 years, and I knew that my life was about to be changed forever.”

During his four months in Europe, Charlie studied the Bible and biblical authority, read mystics, and learned about spirituality, philosophy, and Christianity. At L’Abri, he followed a set schedule for meals, prayed before eating, lived in closed quarters with others of different nationalities, and had hope for change and enlightenment. “I lived in the midst of an intentional Christian community, read new books, prayed more than I ever had, and rediscovered God, whom I had forgotten.”

Living among the Swiss Alps, Charlie felt God calling him to seminary and ministry. “It was there that I began to hatch theological theories that I have since discussed within several of my seminary classes, many times to the chagrin of my classmates.” Charlie is now going through the ordination process within the Episcopal Church and intends to serve in parish ministry.

“I find peace in the memories of the expansion and awakening of my soul, my heart and my mind in the mountains of Switzerland...and can therefore rest in those memories and the assurance gained, that the Triune God has called me home to His presence, and I go forth in His name.”

Written December 2011

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