

Erina Kim-Eubanks Bio

I grew up as the daughter of Korean immigrants, in Orange County, CA. As somebody who attended church most of my life, primarily in Korean immigrant churches, I had the privilege of experiencing church not only as a place of spiritual growth, but also a source of cultural refuge and hospitable community. From a young age, I was highly musical, loved studying and memorizing Scripture, and had a rich faith life and deep connection to the spiritual. Yet I never saw examples of women in leadership, and believed that the most I could aspire to was a “pastor’s wife.”

My faith journey in college was deeply formative for me, helping me develop a more holistic understanding of the gospel and expanding my imagination around Christian leadership. Most of the influential leaders and mentors were brilliant, gifted women of color. Moreover, through experiences like studying abroad in Ghana, working with survivors of trafficking in the slums of Manila, and tutoring in a juvenile detention facility, I gained opportunities to build relationships across racial and socioeconomic lines that expanded my worldview and transformed my theology.

I encountered a God who not only cares about the condition of our souls, but also our holistic flourishing; a God who cares not only about individual righteousness, but also systemic justice. Because of these transformative experiences, I felt called to campus ministry and led student communities at UC Berkeley for 8 years. This season granted me ample opportunities to preach, teach, lead, organize, experiment, receive significant leadership training, and even attend seminary. It was through my work that I also met Michael and eventually got married in 2012. Yet after a season of serving students, I wanted to try working in a context other than the university.

For the next 5 years, I worked in a range of nonprofits, exploring justice and peacemaking in contexts like public schools and prisons. I also went through another season of faith evolution and expansion, as I began more actively engaging in protest during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, while learning more from liberation, womanist, and queer theologies. It was my time in the streets that made me realize how much power clergy hold in shaping subversive communities and faithful witness, and I began feeling called toward local church ministry.

I realized how much power local faith communities can have- both to cause harm, and to bring about healing. As I sought a new imagination for church ministry, God led me to First Pres Hayward, which taught me how to mobilize a spiritual community and its resources to radically love neighbors, and to Bethel Community, which has given me space to reimagine church in a more expansive way.

Since 2019, I have served at Bethel Community, watching it be “resurrected” through a pandemic, a national racial reckoning, a political crisis, a personal health journey (discovering and treating a 3.4 cm tumor in my brain), all while going through the CPM process and raising two young children.

To see Bethel Community transform from an aging, dying congregation to a vibrant, hybrid, multiethnic, multigenerational, community that has been a spiritual refuge to many who thought they were done with church, has been both a surprising and satisfying gift. In this current moment, I am more resolved than ever to the work of reimagining church and feel tremendously privileged to take this step toward ordination and installation at Bethel Community. There’s no other church I would want to serve in times like these, and I can’t wait to see what the Spirit does next!