

Journeys of Light

Mary Taylor, 2017-18 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH



Through life, we all take journeys that are significant to each of us, in our own ways. My Journey centers around one word, light, which has shaped how I view the world, how I view ministry, and how I view my daily interactions with other people. My journey began at Barton College, through NBA XPLOR, and to Hiram College.

For undergrad, I attended Barton College in Wilson, NC. This school began my journey through Religious Studies and Discipleship. Barton's motto is *Habebunt Lumen Vitae*, which translates to, "They shall have the light

of life" (John 8:12). At freshman orientation I remember puzzling over this phrase, wondering why the school chose this. This has been the school's motto since 1923, when the school was still Atlantic Christian College. Whether I was attending my Religion classes, my Mathematics classes, or any of my General Education classes – there was still a drive to be better and to do better. While not all of us found light at the school in a religious way, those at the school did their best to help every student find their light and celebrate their light. It did not matter if we were involved in Greek life or not, what major we chose, or what extra curriculars we involved ourselves in. Our "light," whatever it was, was searched for and celebrated constantly. Through connections at Barton, I was able to grow my light in Discipleship by working at Christmount Christian Assembly, interning as the Youth Minister at First Christian Church of Smithfield, NC, assisting the College Chaplain, and organizing the North Carolina Discipliana Collection housed at Barton College. If not for my years at Barton, I would also not be in the XPLOR program, as it was at Barton that I was first told about the Residency by NBA XPLOR Mission Specialist, Ben Bohren.

At the XPLOR Laboratory, my journey of light continued. This time, it was through the verse John 1:5, "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." While Barton helped me grow my light, XPLOR gave me the confidence to know that my light can shine through anything that comes my way during this year, and every year afterwards. Throughout the training week and in Sabbath and Devotionals since that week, growing and sustaining the light in each of us has been a key focus.

Through XPLO, I've had the joy and honor of working at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio. After my time at Barton, I made sure to pay attention to the motto of this school that I was working at so that I could live into that motto in my life and in my office. Hiram's motto is *Fiat Lux*, or, "Let there be Light" (Gen 1:3). Working at a school with this motto brought me back to the feelings of my freshman self, sitting in the Barton College Chapel and hearing my own school motto for the first time. With this motto, I felt my journey begin to circle back, as well as continue forward. This motto helped me remember my own light throughout this year, and reaffirm why I first wanted to pursue ministry. This motto also showed me throughout this year that I could help these Hiram students find their light in the same ways that Barton's Faculty and Staff helped me find mine.

This is just the beginning of my Journey of Light, from John 8:12, to John 1:5, to finally Genesis 1:3. These three verses have shaped who I am, my journey so far, and to the rest of my journey yet to come.

NBA XPLO is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.**