

FINDING GOD IN STORIES

Graduating senior M.Div. student Alina Kanaski grew up loving to read. She devoured books, even during school and friends' visits. "Books were what first drew me in to Christianity, specifically a kid's book series about a Christian girl. I wanted to be just like her. I remember sitting on my bed, deciding right then with this book in my hand to become a Christian."

Alina's special relationship with books has continued over the years. She says, "Books are what have deepened and broadened my faith. I discover God in books, especially the unexpected ones, so often." Books as varied as Star Wars novels, Madeleine L'Engle essays, classic literature, and nonfiction have all pointed Alina to God in her own life and in the world. "Books show me new things about God that I could never have imagined."



Alina sees all these different insights as showing the power of stories. Stories teach us more vividly and deeply than any words of wisdom can. "One of my favorite parts of being at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was seeing the words of the Bible come to life as I learned about their contexts and histories. The Bible is made up of so many small, fascinating stories. Each of those stories tells us something about God, and tells it so much more vividly than a theological statement would."

When she first preached, Alina was surprised to find that she loved it. "I'm shy and don't like public speaking, so I expected preaching to be more of the same." Instead, preaching was a moment where she felt the Spirit moving. She was able to retell God's stories and remind people of who God is. "Realizing how much I loved preaching was the first time I wondered if maybe I really was called to ministry. It's just telling God's story."

She is pursuing ordination in the PC(USA) as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, and sees that as being intricately connected with storytelling, for both preaching and sacraments tell the story of God's love for us. "By reenacting scenes from God's story in baptism and communion, we retell the story of God. By remembering the stories of the Bible, we retell the story of God for us."

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