

## THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY

Senior Ben Rumbaugh's faith journey is beautifully reflected by the ostrich in Job 39, which is one of his favorite Old Testament images. Ben, who is pursuing the dual Master of Divinity and Master of Public Policy Joint Degree with Carnegie Mellon University, believes "the ostrich provides a playful and creative reminder of God's unseen design for this world and our lives." In fact, it was this playful and creative Spirit that led this small-town, former track star from his native Wooster, Ohio, to Pittsburgh, Pa., by way of Cincinnati, Ohio, New Zealand, and Ashland, Mont. As God's "unseen design" for Ben's life continues to unfold, so does his understanding of social justice as a part of his ministerial call.



Ben grew up in the Presbyterian Church, and had participated in a number of mission trips with his church's tight-knit, youth group. "Going to church was fun for me because all my best friends from school were there." This nurturing sense of Christian community, also a part of God's unseen design for Ben's life, shaped and impassioned his interest in international mission work.

Informed by his youth mission work, Ben pursued an undergraduate degree in international studies, prompting him to think critically about the implications of political science theory within the context of structural systems of injustice. As a rising senior who was energized by a life-changing, study-abroad opportunity in New Zealand, Ben was led to an intentional community through the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice. This experience involved life with 19 colleagues, each working at different, non-profit organizations, who would engage formal, daily curriculum that encouraged practical ways of standing in solidarity with inner city residents to address their most critical, social justice concerns. This experience was pivotal to Ben's faithful post-undergraduate decision to work with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in hopes of securing an assignment in an urban center, his "only frame of reference for social justice work."

Perhaps by virtue of that same, playful and creative Spirit, Ben found himself serving in Ashland, Mont., which has a population of 300, in an environment that challenged his assumptions about the relevance of social justice work outside a metropolitan setting. As a dormitory coordinator at a Native American Catholic School, Ben was responsible for planning and facilitating educational and recreational activities of the indigenous students from two reservations. Invigorated by this rigorous, yet rewarding work, and interested in "giving people the opportunity to live out their faith" in a way that bridges the gap between parish ministry and community, Ben saw PTS's unique, dual degree program as a way to put "a deeper sense of the ideals of God's presence in action to create God's kingdom."

As God's plan for Ben's life becomes increasingly clearer, he continues to find ways to promote and to foster corporate faith in action. To that end he was instrumental in bringing the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network's (PIIN) "Sacred Conversations on Race," to PTS's campus and looks forward with hope to the movement of God through this work toward "eradicating racism in our community as we fully realize God's design for the Beloved Community!" For Ben, who will pursue ordination in the PC(USA), God's design for his life and the world are intricately intertwined at the "intersection between the timeless precepts of our faith and the present, physical space of our communities."

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