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WALTER MORGAN RECEIVES THE 2023 CALIAN AWARD

Custodian of Barbour Library makes time to listen to and minister with everyone

Walter Morgan, custodian at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, is the 2023 recipient of The Calian Award for Campus Community Service. The award honors an exemplary member of the Seminary community who demonstrates excellence in carrying out responsibilities and volunteer assignments and also expresses a caring spirit of good will and hope, essential in life together as a community. Walter was announced as the award recipient at the graduation brunch May 26, 2023.

For five years, Walter has been the custodian of the Barbour Library on campus, and for more than a year he has also cleaned parts of McNaugher Hall. Several persons who nominated Walter for the award testify to his diligent work that keeps these and other parts of campus clean and well-maintained.



But Walter's reputation among the PTS community is not only about what he *does*. Everyone who knows him remarks on how he makes them *feel*. Students, staff, faculty, and visitors to campus are always sure to be greeted by Walter with a smile as he asks, "How are you doing today? Do you need anything? What do you need prayer for?"

This, Walter says, is his ministry. He considers himself a good listener, and is eager to give people a space to be honest about how they are doing and what challenges they are facing. He has used this gift to be in ministry, especially with persons struggling with addiction. Walter explains: "The key thing in addiction ministry is listening. So many people think they have the answers to everything, and if you don't stop to listen and really hear the other person, you won't know what the problem might be. You might miss the real issue."

That's true, he says, of any kind of relationship. And that's exactly how he interacts with everyone, at PTS and in his own neighborhood. Whether it's a Seminary student or a person battling addiction, he makes time to listen. Every day he runs into people needing some kind of help, and believes God wants to minister through him to reach these people.

Sometimes God preaches through Walter too. For 10 years while living in Charleston, W.Va., Walter preached regularly at three different churches. He uses the knowledge and skills he learned in Christian discipleship school in North Carolina, and has also preached in Chapel worship at Pittsburgh Seminary.

Walter often encounters students studying in the Library, and when he senses they are anxious he reminds them that Jesus's earthly ministry was three years—the same time period many students spend in seminary. He tells them that those three years were preparation for the disciples, and after Jesus' death and resurrection they had to be ready to do it on their own. In a similar way, the students will soon be ready to leave PTS as ministers prepared to teach and live the gospel, guided by the Holy Spirit.

In the meantime, Walter says, there's no better place to be than PTS. He loves the welcoming spirit, the love people have for what they're doing, and how committed everyone in the Seminary community is to becoming the best person they can be, with the grace of God.

Upon receiving the award, Walter says he was blown away. "I really didn't know how to feel," he admits. "I never thought about the ministry I was doing—being friendly, asking people how they're doing, smiling at people—was making the difference that it did. But I'm very thankful for it."

Walter feels blessed by God to be honored in this way.

In their nomination of Walter, one Seminary employee said he "embodies what I hope we are becoming at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as staff and faculty. He works every day with integrity, diligence, and kindness. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with him." Another remarked on his love for the people of PTS, and several affirmed the way his kind and caring demeanor and willingness to assist others in need enhances the PTS community.

Walter's manager, Facilities Director Tom Fulton, says: "Walter is very deserving of this reward. He does a wonderful job as a staff member of the Facilities Department, but more importantly he is one of the most caring and compassionate people that I know. He is a great ambassador for PTS in the community, and we are lucky to have him."

What Walter *does* as a custodian is such an important job, but the impact is short-lived. Within hours or days, physical spaces can become just as cluttered and dusty as before. But the way Walter makes people *feel* creates a lasting effect that will not soon be forgotten.

President Emeritus the Rev. Dr. Carnegie (Sam) and Doris Calian and their children contributed an endowment to establish this annual award.

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