

MEET PTS



PROFESSOR JENNIFER KAALUND FOLLOWS DREAM TO PTS

When she was a child, associate professor of New Testament Dr. Jennifer Kaalund was energized by one great dream, and it might not be what you would expect from an accomplished biblical scholar.

She wanted to cure cancer.

Pursuing this aspiration, Dr. Kaalund chose chemistry as her college major, then began a career in health care administration. It was seven years into that career, while interviewing for a promotion, that her desire to pivot became clear. When the interviewer asked her what her dream job would be, she gave an honest answer: teaching.

Reflecting after the interview, Dr. Kaalund realized that of all the subjects she could teach, the New Testament would be her favorite. Having grown up Baptist with a father, and then a sister, who were pastors, the Bible had always served as an undercurrent in her life. Could it also be part of her profession? To find out, she took classes on Paul and on Women Mystics. She was sold, and she soon made the change to full-time study of the New Testament.

Fast forward to today: Dr. Kaalund is settling into her first semester at PTS after teaching the New Testament to undergraduate students for seven years. Perhaps the central theme of her theological work to date has been cultural competency. How do the cultures—of both the ancient world in which the Bible was produced and our world in which we read it—shape its meaning and our interpretation? “For example,” she explains, “I grew up in the South, and I grew up in church. All of that informs how I read the text.” Her work focuses not only on religious or sociopolitical context, but also on *material culture*, that is, on physical factors like artifacts and architecture.

Dr. Kaalund is thrilled to make the shift from teaching at a college to teaching at a seminary.

“What a privilege,” she says, “to be part of the formation of future leaders of the church. What we do in the classroom will help equip them to go out into the world to teach and minister to people.” One of the ways her medical background comes into play is that, to Dr. Kaalund, the classroom is a laboratory. “This is where we journey together. This is where we can ask questions we might otherwise be afraid to ask—hard questions about what’s in the text. Am I reading this right? Do I believe this?”

Teaching is still Dr. Kaalund’s dream job. We are so glad she is doing it here as part of our community!

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