

MEET PTS



# PART-TIME EVENING STUDENT JONATHAN CHRISTMAS PREPARES FOR ORDINATION IN EVANGELICAL COVENANT ORDER

“I moved to Pittsburgh when I was eight years old, so it definitely feels like home!” says Jonathan Christmas, part-time evening student in the **M.Div. program**. Though most of his extended family lives in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., Jonathan has yet another reason to call Pittsburgh home: last summer he and Kelso Museum Associate Curator Jen (formerly) Hipple ’11 were married! “Early on in our relationship, I just knew . . . ,” Jonathan says.

And it was Jen whose continued encouragement led Jonathan to apply to PTS. With a minister for a dad and a mom who kept her son in church after their move to Pittsburgh, Jonathan remained involved in the same, non-denominational Pittsburgh church till he was 32 years old. After high school, he began pursuing an undergraduate education in marketing. “My heart wasn’t in it, though,” he reflects. “When I hit business calculus, I finally realized I was in the wrong major. I knew what I was supposed to be doing: preparing for ministry. So I began taking courses at Community College of Allegheny County toward a major in religious studies—and doing well in school!”

Though his non-denominational church didn’t require a seminary degree, “I felt like I needed a seminary education to fulfill my particular call to ministry,” he notes. “I knew I couldn’t get a strong enough understanding of Scripture or of the historical context of the Bible on my own, try as I did.”

Not long after Jonathan made the change to attending a Presbyterian church in Pittsburgh, its pastor—a PTS alum—told him he should apply to Pittsburgh Seminary. The opportunity came at about the time Jonathan started dating Jen, and she encouraged him to do the same. “She just kept telling me to try. So what I didn’t think was possible *was* possible, and here I am!” he says.

The Seminary’s evening program allows Jonathan to continue his current work at Whole Foods while studying part-time. He’s enjoying the discussions he and Jen have about the cultural context of the Bible and the richness of the biblical languages. “Jen has a major love of language,” he says, “and her enthusiasm for Greek and Hebrew has made me look forward to studying them.”

Recently, Jonathan sensed God’s leading him to leave the small Presbyterian church where he served as an elder in order to “be in church with my wife” at Bridge City, Brighton Heights campus. Though for worship he’s now returned to a non-denominational setting, Jonathan plans to seek ordination in the Evangelical Covenant Order (ECO)—and, as time allows, continue practicing his primary hobby: Brazilian jiu jitsu!

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