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MDIV STUDENT KACY HOWARD IS LEARNING FROM OTHERS—INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Personal tragedy can push us to dark places. But sometimes, through the darkness, we find God patiently waiting.

This was Kacy Howard's experience in college. The loss of her beloved grandmother led to a season of grief and chaos. For two years, she went her own way, hoping to cope with the pain. But with the help of loved ones and a Christian book, she found herself turning back to God.

"I asked God what I should do with my life," Kacy explains, "and suddenly everything started falling into place." Childhood memories, career aspirations, and new learning about herself began to form a new picture and sense of purpose. Kacy realized that God was gently showing her that deep down, she'd always known she should pursue vocational ministry. She found herself calling Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for more information. For her final two years of college, the PTS admissions department provided her with continual support and encouragement, helping her to make seminary education a reality.

Now a student in the master of divinity program, Kacy recalls her first week on campus: "I came here straight out of undergrad. Orientation was overwhelming! I thought, 'I'm in the big leagues now.'"

But Kacy has adjusted to major league seminary, appreciating both the formal and informal learning it provides. For example, she has noted how the theologically diverse student body has created opportunities to grow in both patience and understanding. Other students' perspectives in classroom discussions might call into question her own beliefs or convictions.

Kacy has learned to be grateful for these moments. She notes, "If you can't learn to understand others in a class of 30, how will you do it in a world of billions?"

But it's also important to find kindred spirits. Kacy is now the president of Syngeneia, the Seminary's student group for seminarians of color. In her first year at PTS, she attended the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, an annual gathering held to nurture, sustain, and mobilize African American faith communities. It was refreshing and life-giving for Kacy to meet, learn from, and worship with so many other people of color who shared her faith commitments.

Kacy is still discerning where God will lead her, but she's excited to explore hospital chaplaincy, particularly with children. Her Field Education placement this year is at a children's hospital, and while she will be extremely limited due to the COVID pandemic, the role will still help her experience some aspects of chaplaincy.

Her central goal, in this chaplaincy placement and in her future ministry efforts, will be to help children know that they are deeply loved by God.

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