

FOLLOWING CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

It's not surprising that one of Marty Neal's New Testament heroes is Simon Peter. After all, just as Christ's true identity became apparent to Peter with increasing proximity to the Messiah, Marty's sense of intimacy with God deepens when he immerses himself in the service of others as a part of the faith community. As a senior high school student in Indiana, Pa., Marty felt an ambiguous call to ministry that was rekindled decades later as he became increasingly active in his home church. "If I had a free moment, I was doing something in the church," says Marty of the passion with which he served on the church choir, and as a deacon and elder. His zeal was inspired by his constant presence in the church building, which he regards with reverence as a safe, and uniquely transformational place.



When he realized that his work and home improvement projects were limiting his ability to be more giving of himself in faithful service around the church, he decided, "I've got to make a change." That acknowledgement freed him to discern spiritual prompting to pursue full-time seminary studies as a way to live into the challenge in the Gospel of Matthew to "... strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness ..." (Matt. 6:33).

Marty, a senior M.Div. student, has developed an impressive resume of international mission work through the Seminary's World Mission Initiative; including service in Mexico, Nepal, and Palestine/Israel. One of the souvenirs Marty brought home was a profound gratitude for being able "to see how [others] worship and how they live their lives in relation to God." That perspective is reflected in his appreciation of the diverse expressions of worship by the 20+ denominations that are represented in PTS' daily chapel services, and in the rich classroom discussions that diversity fosters. Undoubtedly the mix of Christian faith traditions attracted Marty to PTS, and continues to shape his course of study and his ideas about liturgy.

Upon graduation in 2018, Marty is considering seeking a traditional, pastoral role, while listening for that still small voice that may gently whisper to him about mission ministry or non-traditional ways of serving God's people. Just like his New Testament idol Peter, Marty will follow Christ exuberantly into the world that God loves.

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