

## ALUMNA FINDS CALLING ON CAMPUS

Melanie Kim graduated from PTS with her M.Div. in 2012 and for two years served First Presbyterian Church in Sarasota, Fla., as the associate pastor. It was while pursuing this meaningful ministry that she felt herself drawn back to the context in which she first sensed God's call, namely, work with students and young adults in higher education. "Prior to seminary, I enjoyed walking alongside students and young professionals as they wrestled with their lives of faith. As an associate pastor, I missed being confronted with the paradoxical markers of the millennial generation and their ethos: suspicious of institutions while also wildly hopeful for good to prevail. I missed being a safe and anchoring presence for young people who have their lives in front of them. I desired to be a part of a community diverse in every way," Melanie reflects.



Now as the campus minister at Ringling College of Art & Design, New College of Florida, and University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee, her primary role is to be a compassionate and caring presence. She encounters people from all walks of life and faith. "As institutions of higher learning that are committed to inclusivity, all three campuses afford me with the privilege of pursuing sacred conversations with students going through some of the most formative years of their adult lives. These conversations challenge me and humble me every single day."

One of the exciting challenges Melanie faces is offering programs for students to engage with the community of Sarasota as an extension of their spiritual lives. "As Christians we know that faith without works is dead," she notes. "I work with wonderful interfaith ministry partners and non-profit organizations to ensure that students are exposed to issues that plague this community. Sarasota is a lovely place with some of the best beaches in the country. It has a large concentration of wealth and the amenities that come with it. However, most would be shocked to learn that human trafficking is pervasive in our community," she shares. Melanie also notes the great disparity of wealth between the predominantly black section of Sarasota known as Newtown, where Ringling College is located, and the rest of the city. "Ringling has a community garden and works with other agencies to make this a space for people to come together for common good. All three schools care deeply about this community and give back in creative and practical ways."

In light of our culture's viewing of religion as "antiquated or superfluous at best," Melanie finds it "deeply encouraging" that her position as campus minister not only exists but also is supported by all three schools. "I see my role as an intrinsic part of nurturing the whole student," she says. "Seminary prepared me for this ministry, which I commit myself to every day. My three years at PTS were a perfectly curated adventure that gave me the capacity to embrace the big wide openness of God's mysterious work in this world, while tethering me to the firm foundations of our faith, rooted in Christ."

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