

MEET PTS



As a native Philadelphian—and a PTS alum with a Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry—Paula Cooper '10/'13 knows that urban community-building is an important focus of the Church. “Through the Holy Spirit Christians have an ability to look at the depressing things of life—violence, disease, deprivation—and see hope and potential where others see only problems,” she notes. And congregations of Christians imitating Christ, who came “not to be served but to serve,” cultivate through hope-inspired service in their communities the experience of the abundant life our loving God created all of us to know. “Names, ethnicities, and politics differ, but our challenges are the same, and Christian community-builders are the best hope for our urban downtrodden,” Paula says.

Paula practiced that perspective at Curby Memorial Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Mo., since the spring of 2014, when she was ordained as a teaching elder and installed as pastor there. She spearheaded the church’s outreach in the community along with David Zweh, a commissioned ruling elder and a native of Liberia. Her leadership helped Curby grow into its increasingly multicultural identity while providing a home, a voice, and—most critically—ongoing pastoral care for its Liberian members, whose anxiety over relatives living still in Liberia heightened as the Ebola virus not only continued to spread across the African continent but also claimed the most lives in Liberia itself.

“But Christians have more than an ability to improve society in these ways,” Paula says—“we have a responsibility to do so. Jesus himself weds the commands to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors—as ourselves! So it’s not possible to love God while neglecting others.” And now, as Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church’s 2017-2019 Phillips Talbot Global Ministry Fellow, Paula is preparing to do just that in Zambia. After serving at MAPC in New York City for several months, Paula will spend a year teaching in Zambia and then explore the Global South before returning to MAPC to complete her two-year fellowship.

“I am humbled and grateful to have the opportunity to continue to serve God as the Phillips Talbot Global Ministry,” she says. “In that role, I expect to be used by God to bring the Word of Reconciliation to those whom God has given ears to hear and eyes to see. I expect to learn as well as teach leaders who have been called to the ministry and have willingly answered that call. And I expect, according to Acts 1:8, to be a witness for Christ even in the remotest part of the earth.”

To God be the Glory!

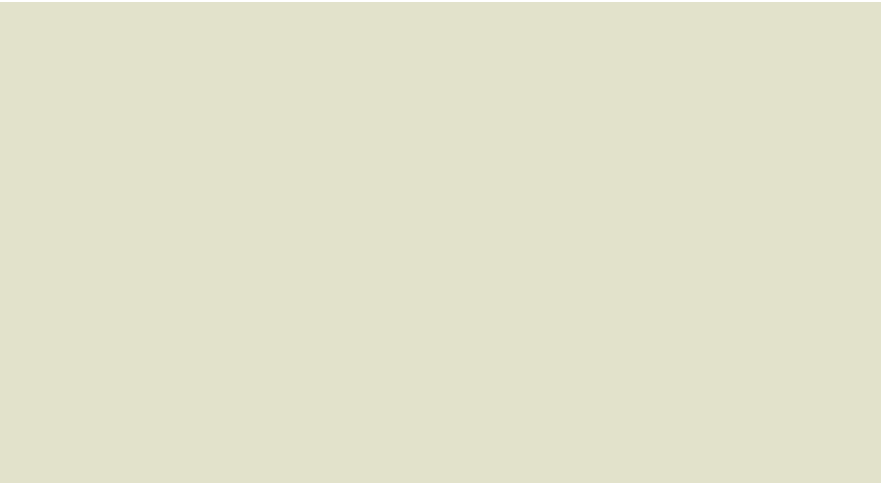
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