

MEET PTS



EVENING MDIV STUDENT REBECCA YOUNG LOOKS TO COMBINE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY DEGREES

It's easy to see why **M.Div.** student Rebecca Young finds camaraderie among the students in her full-time slate of evening classes at Pittsburgh Seminary—"everyone in the evening program has lived such an interesting life!" she says, "and I learn so much by sharing in their experiences." For Rebecca herself has lived "such an interesting life."

My motivations for work have always been rooted in my Christian faith, but here I am seeking to acquire a solid theological framework for what I already do, even if I do not eventually become a pastor.

Originally from Xenia, Ohio (location of one of PTS's predecessor seminaries), Rebecca earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Dayton with majors in French and international studies, concentrating in economics. Her classes and thesis research on colonial girls' education in French colonies incorporated a six-month journalism internship in Morocco. "My experience as a research assistant for an Arabic-language newspaper in 2011, right after the Arab Spring, led to the opportunity to work, under my boss, on a political campaign when the king of Morocco called elections," notes Rebecca, "and both roles motivated me to study international development in grad school." So she enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh for a master's in that field with a specialty in community development in the Middle East.

With master's degree in hand come 2014, Rebecca took a job at The Forbes Funds, then later became business partnerships manager for Partner4Work (formerly Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board), a workforce development agency focused on addressing workforce needs of the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. "In my role, I work with dozens of community providers and employers to connect the dots and ensure that communities' job seekers and workforce needs align, both now and in the future." For example, Rebecca is currently helping plan how workers in a Pittsburgh neighborhood can benefit from the increased economic development yielding jobs that will require levels of education and training that are not typical of this community's residents.

If Rebecca's educational, travel, and work life has been interesting, her spiritual journey has been no less so. "I grew up in a mixed faith household," she notes. Her father had become a (Tibetan) Buddhist at age 20; her mother, formerly a Christian, converted to Buddhism when Rebecca was a teenager. So Rebecca grew up learning about Christianity and Buddhism from parents who work as a psychologist and linguist, respectively. "As a teenager, I was interested in learning more about Christianity," says Rebecca, "so I started reading works by authors including Augustine, Bonhoeffer, and Kierkegaard. The latter particularly spiked my interest in Christianity, with his ideas on the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of life relative to religion."

And recently, Rebecca renewed an interest she had as a teenager—that of becoming a pastor. "I thought about auditing a couple of classes at PTS, but pursuing a ministerial role has been on my heart for a long time, so I decided I should take that 'pull' seriously by enrolling in a degree program." She started her classes last fall. "My motivations for work have always been rooted in my Christian faith, but here I am seeking to acquire a solid theological framework for what I already do, even if I do not eventually become a pastor," she notes. Rebecca remains open to becoming a pastor, though, and so is under care at Shadyside Presbyterian Church, where she serves as an elder. "I highly value the Presbyterian tradition's intentionality and communality in the discernment process," she comments. "I look forward to continuing that process over the next few years. The most likely outcome for me may be some amalgamation of ministry and development work, perhaps for a non-profit that addresses economic development and equity from a religious/Christian grounding."

Already, in her first year at PTS, Rebecca participated in the Seminary's **World Mission Initiative** trip to Israel/Palestine. "In Morocco I learned some Arabic in an Islamic context, so attending worship in Arabic in my Christian tradition while on the WMI trip was very personally meaningful," she reflects. And in the midst of this busy, highly interesting life, Rebecca still finds time to chair the adult education committee at Shadyside PC and remain involved with its youth group—and to serve as a volunteer cat cuddler at the East End Humane Animal Rescue in Homewood!

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