

MEET PTS



PTS STUDENT SARAH KNAPP AND THE EVOLUTION OF HER FAITH

If one word could summarize the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary experience of recent **master of theological studies** graduate Sarah Knapp '21, it might be “evolution.”

The crucial changes in Sarah’s life and faith first began when, in college, she was required to participate in an internship in her field. Because she was planning to someday attend seminary, she decided to intern with the PTS **Miller Summer Youth Institute**.

The experience was so rich, offering a wide range of opportunities for ministry activity and partnerships with non-profits, that Sarah decided not only to attend seminary, but specifically to study at Pittsburgh Seminary. The internship managed to be even more significant for Sarah than serving as confirmation of her vocational path: it also brought her into close relationship with two fellow interns who were Black. This was the first time she had really gotten to know people of color, and as so often happens when we come to know and love the “Other,” it was transformational for Sarah.

However, still an undergraduate college student, Sarah found she was not quite ready to question her childhood worldview.

“It was my classes in seminary—especially **ethics class** with Ron Cole-Turner—that helped me to begin asking hard questions about my beliefs,” she explains. “For example, I had grown up sure there was a six-day creation. My classes helped me to explore alternatives and, most importantly, to understand that it’s okay not to have all the answers.”

Without a doubt, it was classroom learning that was the key for Sarah’s evolving faith journey in seminary. She can point to something important she took away from every course she took at PTS. Dr. Ken Woo’s **church history class** revealed to her the importance of context for theological developments and Scripture interpretation. Dr. Derek Woodard-Lehman’s **two-part course** helped her see the entwinement of theology, the criminal justice system, and racism. And speaking of “evolution,” Sarah engaged in theological reflection on human origins in another Dr. Cole-Turner class, **Humanity in a Scientific Age**. The list goes on.

And yet, change does not come without cost. Church and family contexts do not always welcome evolution in one’s faith. “When I talk to some of my friends and family,” she describes, “I seem to just hit a wall. Their attitude is often, ‘What are they teaching you at that seminary?!’”

But her advice to prospective students is that change is worth it. She understands the evolution of her own faith as a necessary step to better engage the Bible, the world, and herself. She stresses the importance of finding community that will nurture your journey—online if you can’t find it in your local context. Above all, she urges: “Listen to people who disagree with you. And don’t be afraid to be you.”

Sarah is currently in California, where she is considering doctoral study and exploring other teaching opportunities. Regardless of her next vocational step, she is confident that her seminary education has changed her life for the better and will continue to propel her ongoing evolution.

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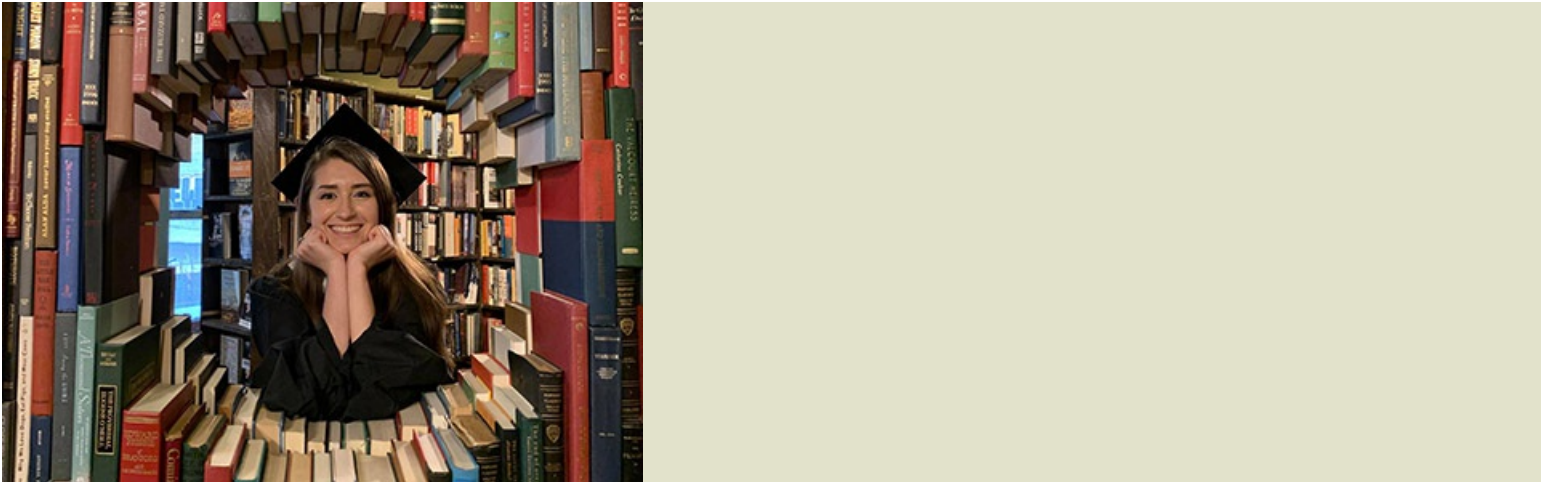
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