

MEET PTS



PROFESSOR STEVEN TUELL RETIRES AFTER SERVING THE CHURCH AND ACADEMY

Goodbyes are never easy, and it will surely be a bittersweet farewell as PTS honors the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Steven Tuell, the James A. Kelso Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament. As he prepares to depart, Steve reflects on the path of calling that brought him to Pittsburgh and on his favorite moments at the Seminary.

After studying at West Virginia Wesleyan College and Princeton Theological Seminary, Steve served in parish ministry as an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, working in churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, and Virginia. It was during that time that Steve discovered his hunger for a deeper engagement with the Hebrew Bible was pulling him to the academy, not the parish, as his primary setting for ministry. He went on to earn his Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Steve never viewed this as leaving ministry, but simply responding to a different ministry calling. In fact, he intended to return to parish ministry after obtaining his Ph.D., but an unexpected invitation to teach undergraduate students brought him to South Carolina.

“That’s when I discovered a passion for teaching!” Steve says with a passion that confirms his story. “It cemented my sense of calling to the ministry of teaching.”

And this was a powerful ministry: in a secular setting at Erskine College and Randolph-Macon College, Steve regularly had the opportunity to introduce the Bible (and the God of the Bible) to young people who had never stepped foot inside a church. It was at these schools that Steve received numerous awards for teaching excellence.

But when Steve came to PTS in 2005 (a move we can partially credit to the influence of fellow Old Testament professor, the Rev. Dr. Jerome Creach), his ministry entered a new phase. No longer would he be teaching the unchurched, but at PTS, he would be helping to form students who were discerning the shape and direction of a calling to ministry. Instead of fielding questions like, “Is this going to be on the test?”, he was helping students figure out how to preach on passages and minister to congregations. He would be teaching the Bible not only as literature, but as Scripture.

Throughout his career, Steve’s research has focused on biblical prophecy—particularly the book of Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve—and the biblical literature of the early Persian Period. He has written numerous articles and book reviews, and his other published works include a commentary on 1 and 2 Chronicles in the Interpretation Series and a commentary on Ezekiel for Baker’s Understanding the Old Testament series.

While teaching (and learning from) students was the heartbeat of Dr. Tuell’s calling, he also cherished his faculty colleagues. “After graduate school, I had almost ritualistically thrown away my copy of John Calvin’s *Institutes*,” Steve recalls, laughing. “Fellow professor Andrew Purves caused me to completely reconsider Calvin. Another colleague: Dale Allison! His work on the history of biblical interpretation has influenced all of my scholarship since.” These were just two of many colleagues who enriched Steve’s life.

He has a humorous outlook not only on his past, but his future. When asked what’s next, he replies, “Nothing. I’d like to try that on.” Yet despite this quip, Steve actually has plenty of projects in the works: an introductory textbook about the prophets, several academic articles, and a major book project about the theme of creation in Scripture.



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