

IN IT TOGETHER: MOTHER AND DAUGHTER ATTEND SEMINARY

It's not everyday you get the chance to attend school with your mother or daughter, but here at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, for Laura and Susan Blank, it is.

"We weren't the first mother/child, father/child combination that they've had at Pittsburgh," said junior Susan Blank, in relation to the question on attending seminary with her daughter, senior Laura Blank. "So I jokingly told former Associate Dean of Admissions the Rev. Sherry Sparks, 'Well, if we can't be the first and be trail blazers I'm not going to do it.' That was one of the several times I had talked with Sherry about going to seminary. 'No, if we're not first then forget it, I'm not doing it.'"

Where does one begin the story of two people and their call to seminary whose influence on each other has been so intertwined? The idea of seminary had been floating around in Laura's mind since high school, and after college she visited several seminaries where she could feel God clearly calling her to seminary, just not yet. So instead she taught music for three years and though she loved her job she could still feel God tugging her somewhere else. However, Susan could see this in her daughter long before high school.

"When Laura was even younger than high school, maybe junior high, one of our interim pastors did a confirmation class just for Laura instead of making her wait because she wanted to join the church," Susan said, beaming at her daughter.

For Susan, though she and her husband were always active members and elders in the church, served as chair on the committee on ministry and moderator of her presbytery, and even was hired for a staff position in her presbytery, she hadn't considered seminary until after Laura. Yet to Laura, her mother's decision to attend seminary didn't come as a surprise at all.

"I was always telling her all about what I'd be doing in classes and my papers because I just knew she would enjoy all of that. So it wasn't a shock that she ended up coming," Laura replied, beaming with equal love and pride for her mother.

So with half of the school year to go, Susan and Laura Blank will continue to inspire and support one another, sharing meals, ideas, conversations, study tips, and handling any obstacles together. And who better to have in your corner than your mother, or your daughter.

Written December 2012



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