

celebrations

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary Fall 2019



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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary prepares women and men for ministries in established and emerging Christian communities around the world. Rooted in the Reformed tradition and with a centuries-old history of mission and scholarship in service of the church, the Seminary is committed to relationships of mutual learning and serving with Christ-followers from other traditions and theological viewpoints. Our faculty and educational resources cultivate theologically reflective and contextually engaged Christian leaders. Our programs nurture vocational formation for bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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CELEBRATING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

As Paul puts it in his opening statement to the Church in Philippi, "I thank my God every time I remember you . . . because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." And at Pittsburgh Seminary we continue to celebrate the faithfulness of God, who "began a good work" here through so many others and who is working today to "bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."

This year marks the 60th "birthday" of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, consolidated in 1959 by the uniting of two Presbyterian seminaries—Western and Pittsburgh-Xenia. (See the article featuring alumnus and Board member Don McKim on page 12.) Reviewing our history gives us reason to celebrate our predecessors, who pursued the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus"—and reason to celebrate the people today who continue that tradition of faithful service to our Lord.

You'll read about some of these people in the following pages. And you'll discover how our resources and programs—in and out of the classroom—help equip our students for contemporary, contextual Christian ministry both close to home and around the world. In celebrating their stories, we celebrate the gracious, loving welcome of God to all.

Thankfully,



David Esterline
President and Professor of Cross-cultural Theological Education



LOOKING BACK AND BRANCHING OUT

Master of divinity senior Hattie Taylor left upstate New York—as in right next to Quebec—for seminary at PTS because "it felt like home" here. For Hattie that desire to branch out, to learn new things, to discern God's leading by "testing the waters" is inherent.

Growing up in The United Methodist Church, at age 15 she started serving as a lay speaker. She knew then that she wanted to become a pastor. But as an undergrad at Houghton College she chose to major in philosophy—"just to make sure." Her course of studies didn't change her mind.

"I knew about Pittsburgh Seminary because my dad graduated from here in 1989. Since he had such a good experience, I decided to visit. I found the community friendly and welcoming—and I liked the balanced approach to social action." So south she came.

And with her she brought experience working in a Victorian-era museum—experience that helped her land a work-support job in our Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology. "During my first semester," she reflects, "I took Old Testament with Dr. Tappy. My work in the Museum informed my understanding of the history I was learning in that class. In turn, the class and subsequent OT courses have enhanced my



appreciation of the ancient material culture from the biblical lands displayed in the Museum." A win-win for Hattie, who says her knowledge of the Bible "is much stronger now."

Hattie especially enjoys interacting with the people who visit the Kelso. "I give tours to confirmation groups from churches and people in substance abuse recovery programs, school children and adult Bible study groups, even archaeologists who drop in. Constant learning takes place in the Museum, and sometimes guests enlighten me about an object I thought I fully understood already. I love discovering how the picture fits together," she says.

The Early Bronze Age room is Hattie's favorite. Displaying the oldest material in the Museum, "it demonstrates a less complex way of life," she notes.

"Real people used these objects—and survived without computers and other modern gadgets."

Hattie thinks of her Museum work as para ministry. She's also engaged in pastoral ministry—not in a UMC church, as one might expect, but at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. "I pursued a field education placement there because I wanted an experience that differed from what I had growing up," she explains. For Hattie, discernment involves branching out.

Learn More

To learn more about the Seminary's master of divinity program, visit www.pts.edu/master-divinity. Additionally, M.Div. students can complete the emphasis in church planting; joint degrees in law, social work, or public policy; or the track in Anglican/Episcopal studies.

FUTURE FORWARD CHURCHES

In 2003, after 13 years at two of the world's premier leadership development firms, Lee Kricher returned to the senior pastorate of Pittsburgh's non-denominational Amplify Church, which he co-founded with his wife, Linda, in 1976. In the 15 years after Lee resumed pastoral leadership at Amplify, it saw significant growth and transformation into a thriving, multigenerational church. Lee and Linda recently founded Future Forward Churches to provide coaching that helps churches "fully engage the next generation." And in 2016, Zondervan/HarperCollins published Lee's first book, *For A New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church*. Wow.

While already in the process of earning a Certificate in Church Planting and Revitalization at PTS, this summer Lee embarked on a new goal here: pursuing his D.Min. in the Parish Ministry: Risking Faithfully Focus.

Having led Amplify back to a position of strength for reaching into a new generation and recently handed off the role of lead pastor, he now wants to extend his understanding and unique perspective on how to apply proven leadership principles to ensure the thriving of the contemporary church at large. The distinctive professor-mentor structure of our D.Min. program, coupled with the opportunity to exchange ideas with fellow students in a 15-member cohort, attracted Lee to enroll.

Reflecting on his return to Amplify, Lee notes, "Initially, I didn't have a good reason to leave the corporate world to revive a dying church—other than that I sensed God's call and had a passion to see others develop their potential." Certainly reason enough! He couldn't accept the thought that younger generations may be rejecting core truths about Christianity simply "because we expected and assumed

they would accept our preferred approach to church." Lee explains, "It wasn't about changing our statement of faith or core beliefs—it was about evaluating and changing, as needed, our programs, ministries, and practices to make sure the best days are still ahead."

How do you accomplish that goal? Amplify followed five key steps, which Lee expounds in his book. "And the first step is the most important: Adopt a New Mindset. Observing a steady decrease in the number of children and young adults attending Amplify, our leaders and members had to shed the mindset, 'If it was good enough for me, it's good enough for them,' and ask, 'What will it take to reach the next generation?'" That simple change sparked the dramatic turnaround at Amplify.

Lee anticipates deepening his God-given insights through the D.Min. program at PTS—and sharing them widely. "I've felt warmly welcomed at PTS—and I hope other non-denominational Christian leaders will join me as students here."

"It wasn't about changing our statement of faith or core beliefs—it was about evaluating and changing, as needed, our programs, ministries, and practices to make sure the best days are still ahead."

FOCUSING ON FOSTER CARE

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with degrees in psychology and administration of justice, joint M.Div./MSW student and Metro-Urban Institute Fellow Ciera (Cici) James knew she wanted to go to seminary. But the Chesapeake, Va., native thought she'd leave Pittsburgh for such a program. "I decided to tour PTS with a friend just because it was close and I wanted to see what seminary was like."

Cici grew up in a nondenominational Christian church and also attended one during college. So when considering seminaries, she looked at several other schools. "But I was excited about the people at PTS, the potential for a joint-degree program, and the chance to continue relationships I had already made during my four years in Pittsburgh," she notes. After receiving generous financial support from PTS, she enrolled. "One of my favorite parts of the M.Div. program has been studying Greek!" she says.

In the MSW program at Pitt, Cici's pursuing the Children, Youth, and Families Certificate to prepare for serving at-risk youth, particularly those in the foster care system. Similarly, as an MUI Fellow she's focusing on adoption and foster care. "I believe the Lord has called me to love and serve these populations—people who often go overlooked and need someone to take the time to show God's heart to them," she reflects. "Through the fellowship and my



placement, I'll explore the ways my faith has shaped my heart for this ministry, as well as ways the church can be more involved in supporting these vulnerable groups, cherished by God."

And "'supported' is the word that encapsulates my experience at PTS," says Cici. "Here I've felt supported by professors who want me to succeed and who've encouraged me through the challenges of graduate work. I've felt supported in my search for a field education placement and in my work-support job in the Worship Program. Even when I've felt out of my depth, I've felt like I'm being equipped. My classmates have taken time to study with me, have fun with me, and be companions when personal difficulties arise—they've shown their support by truly wanting to get to know me and be in community with me.

Most importantly, I've felt supported through the challenges that seminary studies pose to my belief system—challenges that are helping strengthen my faith."

Cici sums up her PTS experience this way: "Seminary has been so much better than I could have imagined." No wonder Cici always seems to be smiling.

Learn More

To learn more about the Seminary's joint M.Div./MSW with the University of Pittsburgh visit www.pts.edu/MDiv-MSW. Students can earn both degrees in four years instead of the usual five. Those interested in the Metro-Urban Institute Fellowship through the Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry will find more information at www.pts.edu/MUI-Fellowship.



REACHING INTO UNFAMILIAR CONTEXTS

Felicia Zamora was raised in the Baptist church—in Managua, Nicaragua. “My grandfather, a pastor, had an illustrated Bible and a lot of books on theology, which I always liked reading,” she says. Felicia went to a Baptist school through grade four. Then the Zamoras moved temporarily to Fairfax, Va., where they began attending a Mennonite church—a connection that would play a major role in Felicia’s future education.

After two years and the family’s return to Managua, Felicia completed her secondary education at a school run by two missionary families. “I took it upon myself to study sects and cults, and I made a personal hobby out of learning how to defend my Christian faith in the light of their tenets.” When she started considering college, the family’s Mennonite connection resurfaced.

“American friends in Virginia had offered to house any of us kids who wanted to attend Eastern Mennonite University, so that’s where I headed!” Coming from a country plagued by violence, she identified with and appreciated the Mennonites’ pacifist views. “My education at EMU taught me not only to evangelize but actually to become part of the community in which I live and minister.”

Returning to Nicaragua following graduation, Felicia took a job with Provadenic, a non-profit focusing on primary health care by training people in rural areas to be the “doctors” in their communities. Felicia’s job required travel to communities that lacked the comforts of electricity and running water. “I learned to see these people as brothers and sisters who helped strengthen my faith—as valuable human beings discriminated against just because of where they

are from,” she notes. For 14 years, Felicia connected teams of American pastors and their congregations with these communities and learned skills in resolving conflicts between the culturally different groups. Throughout that time, she maintained her interest in reading theology.

“Over the years, friends and pastors had suggested that I go to seminary,” she recalls. “Finally, in 2017, I decided to heed them. Through my work, the Rev. Tim Spring ’84 had introduced me to PTS. I liked its diversity of perspectives and decided to trust God to lead me. Miraculously, I got my visa to come to the U.S. in 2018, amid much unrest in Nicaragua.”

Now an M.Div. student, Felicia’s “not here only to gain knowledge about the Bible but also to acquire skills in sharing that knowledge effectively in contexts that are different from my own.” Like the contexts of her former work in Nicaragua.

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GROWTH AND MINISTRY OUTSIDE

Ministry related to the church has been part of my life since I can remember,” says recent M.Div. graduate Chris Taylor ’19, “and voices of affirmation have consistently reinforced my vocational aims.”

One of those voices came from a church youth leader when Chris was in high school. “Because of his influence, I participated in the Miller Summer Youth Institute at PTS the summer before my senior year. SYI put full-time ministry in the back of my mind,” he reflects. And it stayed there through his years as a history major at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he involved himself in Presbyterian Campus Ministry.

So after graduating from college, Chris moved to Maine, where he worked in Acadia National Park with A Christian Ministry in the National Parks. “On Sundays I served as part of a team that led two morning worship services and a sunset service at different points in the park,” he explains. After that summer in Maine, Chris moved back to North Carolina to do youth ministry. Because he enjoyed serving in that role, he also spent his time “being intentional about where to go to seminary.”

A number of factors influenced Chris’s choice of PTS. “One of them was that, though this seminary is rooted in



the Presbyterian tradition and enrolls a lot of Presbyterian students, other Christian traditions are also widely represented, both in the student body and on the faculty,” he notes.

Another factor influencing his decision involved his ability to explore pursuing a creative ministry related to the outdoors—a setting in which much of youth ministry takes place. “My own relationship with and understanding of God have been significantly shaped by my outdoor experiences. And as a youth minister—and more recently a student at PTS who’s regularly served as an SYI counselor—I’ve seen lots of young people grow in their relationship with God as a result of experiencing creation and doing ministry in outdoor contexts, such as serving communities through urban agriculture, for example.”

After graduating from the Seminary this year, Chris not only continued working in the Admissions Office but also began helping to expand SYI—the program that launched his relationship with PTS. “I’ve been privileged to help plan and recruit for an SYI 2020 academy and make preparations for its summer mission experiences,” Chris says. “And I’ve been blessed to have a part in furthering the growth of SYI participants in the knowledge and love of God—exactly what the program nurtured in me!”

Learn More

To learn more about the Miller Summer Youth Institute and the opportunities it offers college students to engage in internships and rising high school seniors and first-year college students to earn college credit through the academy, visit www.pts.edu/SYI.



SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN URBAN SPACES

Thanks to the leadership of the Rev. Drs. R. Drew Smith (pictured second row, far right), professor of urban ministry, and John Welch '02 (left of Dr. Smith), vice president for community engagement and dean of students, this summer PTS students and alums got an opportunity to see firsthand how faith communities in South Africa respond to social challenges in urban spaces. The World Mission Initiative and Metro-Urban Institute collaborated in sponsoring this immersion experience—the second of its kind, following the trip there in 2014.

Coming 25 years after the 1994 democratic transition in South Africa, this summer's experience allowed the PTS group to hear their hosts' perspectives and make their own observations and assessments about problems of poverty and inequality within urban South Africa. "They

gained valuable insights into how churches there are positioned in relation to these problems," notes Dr. Smith.

During the 11-day trip, participants visited worshiping communities and dialogued with church leaders in Pretoria and Johannesburg—two of the most prominent and influential cities within South Africa. The group focused particular attention on churches in Pretoria Central, Atteridgeville Township, and Alexandra Township.

The visit to Alexandra Township, hosted by the African Independent Churches Development Programme, allowed PTS participants to witness conditions in one of the poorest townships in South Africa. The group engaged in a forum with several Alexandran pastors about church ministry in this socially challenging

context, which is immediately adjacent to the wealthiest suburb on the African continent (Sandton). So following their half-day visit to Alexandra Township, the group spent an evening in Sandton to highlight the contrast between intensified poverty and wealth within South Africa. Drs. Smith and Welch also led trip participants in a dialogue with students and faculty at a forum hosted for the PTS group at the University of Pretoria School of Theology.

Additionally, the PTS delegation attended worship services at churches in Pretoria Central; spent an evening at an HIV/AIDS orphanage, where they helped serve the evening meal and engaged the children in recreation; and interacted with eminent anti-apartheid activist Dr. Brigalia Bam, former director of the South African Electoral Commission, retired university president, and first woman to serve as General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

"My hope is that the hospitality extended to us by persons who may have been facing many challenges and struggles themselves, and the resolve demonstrated by these leaders and ministries in responding faithfully to sometimes difficult circumstances, will serve as guideposts for all of us in the PTS group as we seek to fulfill our individual and collective callings," says Dr. Smith.

"They gained valuable insights into how churches [in South Africa] are positioned in relation to these problems [of urban poverty and inequality]."

CONTINUED LEARNING FOR CONTINUING GROWTH

I am a life-long learner always looking for opportunities to take classes," says the Rev. Dr. Donna Giver-Johnston, pastor of Community PC of Ben Avon, Pa. Some years after seminary, she earned a Certificate in Spiritual Formation from Pittsburgh and Columbia seminaries, and since moving to Pittsburgh in 2013 she's taken full advantage of the offerings in the Seminary's Continuing Education Program.

This year Donna will be *teaching* a ConEd course—Preaching a Relevant Word to a Restless People. "Preachers may be reluctant to mention current events from the pulpit," notes Donna. "But it's important not to communicate inadvertently that we don't care about what's happening in the world. So together we'll learn ways to preach sermons that are pastorally sensitive, prophetically challenging, and particularly relevant today—not in a partisan way, but in one that helps people find their voice as leaders seeking to follow Jesus' command to love God and neighbor," she explains.

Raised Roman Catholic, Donna was 12 when she heard God's call to serve in the church. But because she was female, the priesthood wasn't an option. "I thought I must have accidentally overheard the divine call meant for the boy kneeling next to me," she remembers.



Years later, at Westminster College she majored in industrial relations, then went to work in Washington, D.C. "One Sunday morning I attended worship at New York Avenue PC, where I'd been tutoring inner-city kids. There I saw what I'd never seen before: a woman in the pulpit. I said to God, 'Oh, that's what you called me to do.'" Soon afterwards Donna quit her government job, enrolled in seminary, and upon graduation received a preaching award.

After a number of years in the pastorate, she began wanting to learn more about spiritual formation—"for my own nourishment and for guiding others spiritually," she notes. "The certificate program allowed me to attend to my restless heart seeking to rest in God. And the experiences and training I received have enriched my pastoral ministry with a collection

of resources for deepening spiritual practices," she comments.

But Donna wasn't done. "I love to ask questions," she insists. And after 10 years in the church and two as a stay-at-home mom, she enrolled at Vanderbilt University and earned a Ph.D. in homiletics and liturgics. "I believe it's vitally important that pastors continue to study and learn—for their own growth and the growth of their congregations," she concludes.

Learn More

To learn more about the Seminary's Continuing Education Program, offering workshops and lectures on topics such as Bible and theology, church planting and mission, spirituality, pastoral care, and counseling, visit www.pts.edu/CE.



SMALL CHURCH—BIG HEART FOR MINISTRY

Recent Church Planting and Revitalization Certificate graduate Judi Slater '91/'11/'18 pastors the First PC of Duquesne, located in one of the most under-resourced communities in Pennsylvania. “We are a smaller congregation with a big heart for ministry in the community,” she notes. “Our programs include a mission store, a community garden, monthly food boxes for senior citizens, food and library boxes in the yard, the Open Table mission that helps young adults raised in poverty move forward in reaching their life’s goals, and a children/youth community outreach program.”

Judi’s also joined two other pastors in working with Lincoln Place PC—another smaller congregation, but one that’s decided to continue serving the community. Lincoln Place does so via a weekly free lunch for some 50 senior

citizens, Kids Club and family movie nights, and hosting many community activities in the church building.

Amid her busy ministry, the Church Planting and Revitalization program helped Judi develop a “meaningful and joyful spiritual practice”: The Daily Examen for Families. “My project for my certificate program was to introduce this practice to several families in my church,” Judi notes, “and my husband and I started following it then. We find it to be a great way to connect with each other and to see more of God’s presence in our days.”

A delightfully surprising way Judi has seen more of God’s presence involves the large yard her church enjoys. “Two years ago, we got to know Grow Pittsburgh, which helped us plant an amazing community garden—the Duquesne Community Victory

Garden,” she says. “Through this garden, we have connected with more than 40 people in the community who enjoy being a part of the garden family. The garden promotes healthy eating by providing free produce for the community, and it has also become a community gathering place. As we entered our second planting season, we were excited to add a children’s section, a fire pit, and a flower garden. Our garden coordinator has informed me that he would like us to have chickens, so who knows what will happen next!”

Judi notes further that, for the last two decades, First PC of Duquesne has had a partnership with a larger, suburban church—John McMillan PC. “On Mondays, volunteers from JMPC come to Duquesne to provide dinner and leadership for our Kids Club, a community outreach program for children and youth. Kids Club has enabled us to connect with families in the community, and through those connections our church has become a cross-cultural congregation.” Yet another reason to celebrate!

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BUILDING PEACE IN MYANMAR

Thawng Hei '19 came to Pittsburgh Seminary with the hope of one day achieving his childhood dream: earning a Ph.D. in the United States and helping lead his home community in Myanmar toward a more harmonious future. Toward that end, his research has explored the role of Christianity in peace-building and inter-religious dialogue in the Myanmar context.

Thawng explains that Myanmar has been plagued by ethnic civil war for the last several decades, since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1948. As the largest, Buddhist ethnic group, the Bamar still hold most of the country’s leadership positions. Minority ethnic groups such as the Chin, the group to which Thawng and his family belong, often struggle to have their voices heard—a situation that leads to ongoing conflict.

While peace talks remain a priority for the current government in Myanmar, Thawng believes that Christianity is integral to bringing about lasting peace in his home country. “Christianity has a distinctive role to play in the peace-building process in a country with this kind of long, historic conflict,” he says.

“The new, democratic government has given ethnic minorities more representation in positions of power and Christians opportunities to participate in the political process—a hopeful trend for Myanmar’s future,”



notes Thawng. “The Myanmar church needs to initiate peace-building.”

So Thawng seeks to learn more about how his faith can be an agent for change and peace in Myanmar. Before beginning his graduate work at PTS, Thawng served for several years as a pastor and teacher in the capital city of Yangon and earned a master of theology from Asia Graduate School of Theology, Quezon City (Metro-Manilla), Philippines. He hopes to earn his Ph.D. in the next few years and then return to Myanmar as a community leader. “I feel God’s call on my life for this important work—and also God’s call to continue serving as a teacher and pastor to people in my community,” he notes.

Even as a master of theological studies student in Pittsburgh, Thawng

continued to play an active role in his family and home community. Thanks to modern technology, he stayed in regular communication with his wife and two children, who remained in Yangon, and in touch with his fellow Chin. Thawng believes his work at PTS prepared him for faithful leadership in the church and effective advocacy for peace in his beloved home country.

Learn More

To learn more about the Seminary’s master of theological studies program, visit www.pts.edu/MA-Theological-Studies. With flexibility to tailor the course of study, the 48 semester-credit-hour MTS degree is an academic program that provides a focused understanding of one or more theological disciplines for further graduate study or for general education.



WALKING INTO AN UNFOLDING CALL

Unfolding. That's the word Marlaena Cochran '19 uses to describe her call and path to chaplaincy.

A Pittsburgh native, Marlaena majored in history and pre-law at Grove City College, then earned her JD from Duquesne University. While subsequently she worked for Pittsburgh non-profits and churches in administrative roles ranging from accounting to non-ordained ministries, a pastor once said to her, "Marlaena, I think the ministry might be in your future."

So Marlaena pursued a discernment process between seminary and spiritual direction. "I decided on spiritual direction—coming alongside people in a listening and prayerful way," she notes. Over the next several years she earned three two-year certificates in the field. "As a spiritual director, I was helping people

grow through being with them amid transitions, uncertainty, crises, and personal darkness. I increasingly found myself being asked to fill that ministry of presence with others." Then, continued visits to her mom over an extended hospitalization gave Marlaena a glimpse into hospital chaplaincy.

"I was in the habit of going on an annual, eight-day silent retreat with the Jesuits. During my next fall retreat, I prayed for guidance as to what kind of presence God wanted me to bear in the second half of my life. After several days of prayerfully holding this question, I heard God's answer clear as day: chaplaincy."

Marlaena held her decision in prayer during Advent that year. "I also began talking to various people in my relational realms. Most of them responded that seminary seemed like a natural next step for me." So she

applied to PTS's M.Div. program. During Marlaena's second year of seminary, she tested her call through a field education placement at Children's Hospital. She had such a meaningful experience that she returned to Children's for a second year. For a different experience, she chose Family Hospice for her Clinical Pastoral Education placement. The non-profit provides holistic services to people with life-limiting illness or injury. And when a chaplaincy position came open just before Marlaena's graduation in May, she applied and got the job.

"As I look back over my life, I am grateful for the space God has provided for my call to chaplaincy to unfold—from spiritual direction training to ministry in the local church, then a more concentrated experience at Children's Hospital, and now in fuller form at Family Hospice," Marlaena reflects. "It feels like I've been slowly and steadily walking into this call. My path has unfolded as I've taken—and continue to take—each step."

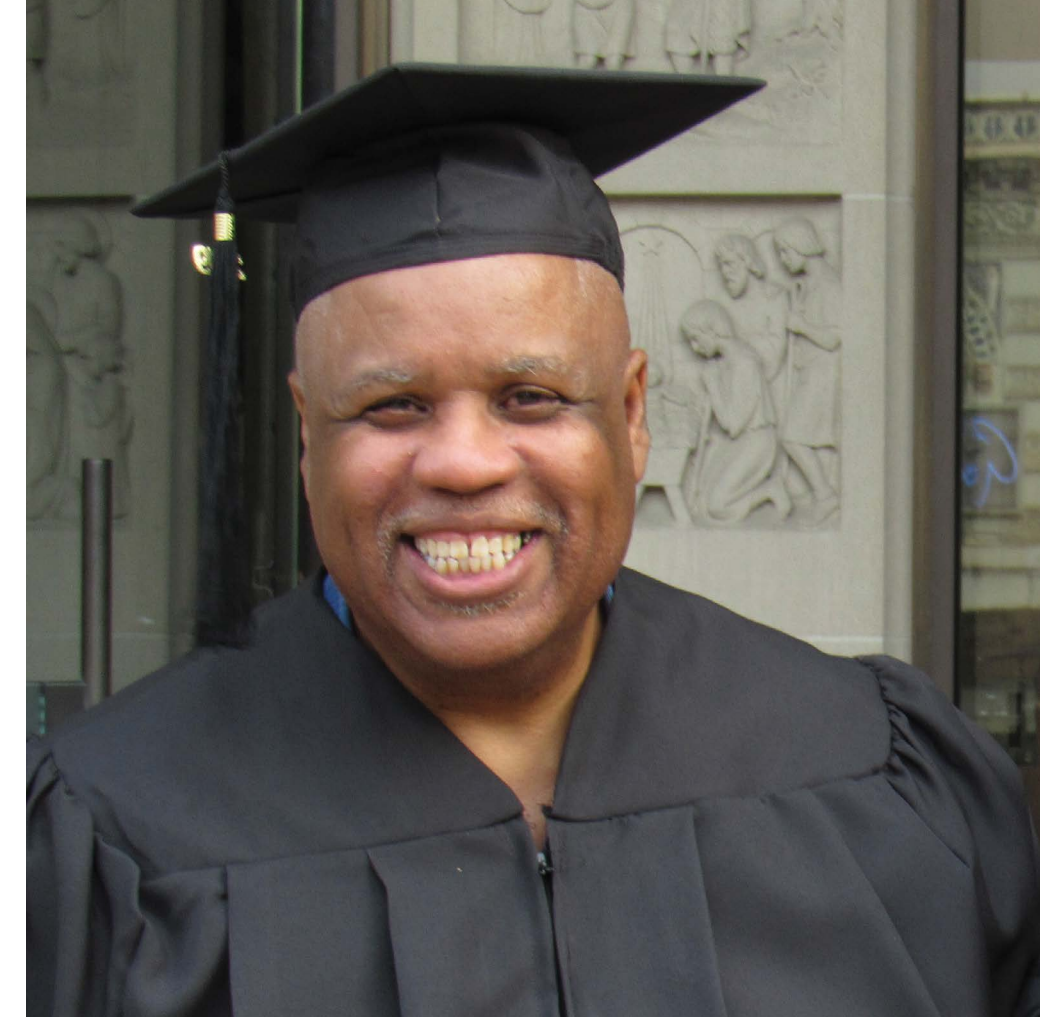
"As I look back over my life, I am grateful for the space God has provided for my call to chaplaincy to unfold—from spiritual direction training to ministry in the local church, then a more concentrated experience at Children's Hospital, and now in fuller form at Family Hospice."

LEARNING THE ART OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

Wake up at 3:00 a.m. Work eight hours as a Port Authority bus driver. Pick up the grandkids. Attend class till 9:00 each evening. Study till midnight. Sleep for three hours. Repeat. At the start of seminary, so went the daily schedule for Nate Pennybaker, who graduated in 2019 with his master of arts in pastoral studies.

Born in Homewood, Nate has known heartache. His father walked out on his family around the time of Nate's birth. At 13 Nate started using drugs, at 15 alcohol, and at 27 crack cocaine. He became a father at age 24, then moved to Washington, D.C., to be with his son. While there, Nate's brother was shot and killed. His drug use and anger issues escalated, and he eventually returned to Pittsburgh, soon to be joined by his young son. So Nate became a single father. He began working at a local grocery store.

A customer invited Nate to church. "I had to straighten up to take care of my son," he says. "I started attending Mount Ararat Baptist Church and was saved." Nate married and had four more children, but when his wife became abusive and was jailed, he again became a single father—this time to five children. To provide for them, he took a job as a city bus driver.



Earlier in life, Nate had considered becoming a firefighter. While driving his bus one day, he "prayed and heard God say, 'I want you to be a spiritual firefighter.'" He felt God calling him to a ministry of preaching. So he followed that call. The first time Nate gave a sermon, he saw a man in the congregation who "looked just like me." That man was his biological father!

In 2001, Nate married Terri Lynn, now a PTS student who serves with him at Triedstone Baptist Church, which Nate has pastored since 2004—and which his father eventually joined. Realizing he "could not take [his] church further without having more to give to the congregation," Nate enrolled at PTS in 2012. The next year he found himself in the ICU with double pneumonia,

congestive heart failure, and Legionnaires' disease.

Fighting his way back to good health, he resumed and completed his seminary studies. "While slipping in and out of sleep during my hospital stay, I prayed, 'Dear God, please don't let me suffer. Take me now. But if you spare me, I'll serve you for the rest of my days.'" Which is just what Nate is doing.

Learn More

To learn more about the Seminary's two-year master of arts in pastoral studies, which provides grounding in core disciplines and allows students to select from a variety of ministerial electives to suit their interests and vocational needs, visit www.pts.edu/MA-Pastoral-Studies.

SOLIDIFYING AN EPOCH

This year we're celebrating the 60th anniversary of the consolidation of Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary of the United Presbyterian Church of North America and Western Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America—and thus the birth of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary," enthuses Board member the Rev. Dr. Donald K. McKim '74, who literally wrote the book (*Ever a Vision*) on PTS's history. The newly formed seminary emerged from the 1958 formation of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

To mark this anniversary, Don—who served as academic and reference editor for Westminster John Knox Press—will help introduce the PTS oral history project, titled "Early Years, Consolidating Memories," at the November 2019 Board meeting. "Well-coordinated by historian John

Horan, the project features audio and video interviews of students, faculty, and others with unique connections to the Seminary in the early, formative years of its existence, when administrations, faculty, and students merged into the new institution," Don explains. "An important contribution to our permanent archive through the interviewees' memories of professors, seminary life, and the school's emerging mission, these reflections witness to ways PTS community members of the time understood the Seminary's importance for their lives and ministries."

The project includes an interview of Don himself, as well as "a number of people I've known through the years. So from an 'up-close-and-personal perspective,'" he comments, "this project has been very satisfying." Don points out the importance of pursuing the oral history project today so as not

to lose the opportunity to preserve these memories, now six decades past.

"In the interviews, we hear about the 'growing pains' of PTS, memorable personalities, frictions, ways in which prior 'United Presbyterian' and 'Presbyterian' denominational traditions were influential, and ways that visions of Christian life and ministry were enlarged," he says. "Hearing these voices helps us understand what's in our 'social DNA'—including our ecumenism."

Don continues, "Throughout our history as primarily Presbyterian, we've comprised a healthy mix of Christian traditions and various denominations. Diversity, welcome, and change have been integral to who we are—so we've grappled with identity questions for decades. Knowing, understanding, and preserving this history helps ensure that future generations can learn from our past for faithful Christian service in the world of today."

He concludes, "I'm excited for the ways these fascinating interviews open up the life of the Seminary through personal stories of those who experienced this period firsthand. They help us 'solidify an epoch,' as one interviewee memorably put it."

"Hearing these voices helps us understand what's in our 'social DNA'—including our ecumenism. Throughout our history, . . . Diversity, welcome, and change have been integral to who we are."

During the annual Alumnae/i Days 2019, the Seminary honored three alums for their many years of distinguished work in the areas of mission, pastoral ministry, and specialized ministry, respectively. We also recognized a fourth graduate with The Fred McFeely Rogers Award for Creative Ministry. Read about these outstanding alums on the following pages.



THE REV. CAREY JO JOHNSTON '03 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA IN MISSION

Since 1989, Carey Jo Johnston has served as a mission consultant with Literacy & Evangelism International. She is materials development coordinator for LEI USA and managing director of the LEI Canada office.

Carey Jo received her master's in theology with a mission emphasis from Fuller Theological Seminary, training from the Summer Institute of

Linguistics, and an M.Div. from PTS. With LEI she helps equip the church to share the gospel with the world's more than two billion non-readers through the gift of reading and conversational English.

Carey Jo has taught at LEI's International Literacy Training Institute in Tulsa, Okla., for 30 years and also at international training institutes. She has worked with numerous churches and missions to develop Bible-content adult literacy materials in more than 60 languages and helped train volunteer ESL and literacy teachers in 20 countries outside the U.S. and Canada, including Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, India, Pakistan, South Korea, and Philippines.



Ordained in the Presbyterian Church in Canada since moving there in 2004, she co-pastored Knox PC in Bobcaygeon, Ontario, for a decade. She now serves the local church through pulpit supply, the committees of Ontario's Oak Ridges Presbytery, and as an interim moderator.

THE REV. DR. WILLIAM GIBSON McCOY '87/'07 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

After graduating from PTS, Bill McCoy became associate pastor for youth and family ministries at Sewickley PC, and its youth ministry blossomed. He also served in ministry at Western Penitentiary, Sewickley Ministerium (as president), and on Pittsburgh Presbytery's Investment in Mission to India and Pakistan and Preparation for Ministry committees.

After six years, Bill was called as senior pastor of New Wilmington PC. During his pastorate the church's annual budget tripled, giving to missions rose dramatically, and church membership grew by more than 35 percent, so that New Wilmington PC led the Presbytery in growth and mission giving. Bill also served on the boards of Shenango Presbyterian Home and Mercer State Prison Chapel, as president of New Wilmington Ministerium, and as a member of Shenango Presbytery's Evangelism, Stewardship and Mission, and Bills and Overtures committees and Permanent Judicial Council.

In 2006 Bill became senior pastor of First PC of Charleston, W.Va. He also received his D.Min. from PTS. Under his leadership First PC began emphasizing global mission,



reestablished men's groups and children's and youth ministry programs, and more. He also served as president of the Westminster Foundation, Board member at PTS, and vice moderator of the Presbytery of West Virginia, from which he is honorably retired.

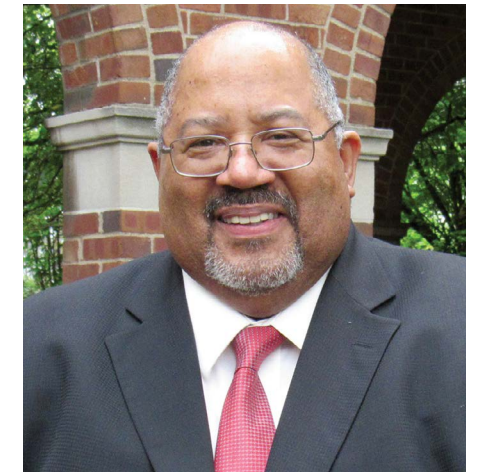
THE REV. DR. JOHN E. WHITE '82/'09 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS IN SPECIALIZED MINISTRY

Born and raised in greater Pittsburgh, John White earned his bachelor's in biblical studies and philosophy from Geneva College and M.Div. and D.Min. from Pittsburgh Seminary. While still a master's student at PTS, he began serving as the Seminary's director of admissions and student relations, during which time he also moderated the session of Hazelwood PC. Eighteen years after graduating, John became dean of students. In those two positions he

served for a combined 12 years at Pittsburgh Seminary.

In the intervening period, and having been ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA), John ministered as pastor of Trinity PC in St. Petersburg, Fla., then as pastor of Witherspoon Street PC in Princeton, N.J. After returning to Pittsburgh as dean of students in 2000, John moderated two church sessions and served as temporary supply pastor of Bethesda PC. In addition, he became vice moderator of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

In 2005 he was called to Decatur, Ga., to become vice president for student relations and dean of students at Columbia Theological Seminary. There he continued to provide leadership in the church. After eight years in Georgia, John was called to his current



position—that of vice president for student relations and dean of student life at Princeton Theological Seminary. Since returning to New Jersey, he has also served as a member of the Leadership Transitional Team and the Committee on Ministry for New Brunswick Presbytery. In 2018 he began moderating the session of First PC in Hamilton Square.

THE REV. KELLIE D. WILD '09 THE FRED McFEELY ROGERS AWARD FOR CREATIVE MINISTRY

For more than 24 years, Kellie Wild has worked with people living in poverty, including the homeless, in senior management positions for non-profit and for-profit organizations. Her wide-ranging degrees and licensure include an M.Div. from Pittsburgh Seminary and ordination as an elder in the UMC, a JD from Duquesne University and membership in the Pennsylvania bar, plus bachelor's degrees from Allegheny College and Thomas

Jefferson University and certification as a physical therapist.

Previously Kellie served as director of programs for Pittsburgh's Light of Life Rescue Mission, where she provided operational visioning, oversight, direction, analysis, and leadership for serving "the poor, addicted, abused, and needy." In 2012 she assumed her current job as IMPACTS program director for East End Cooperative Ministry. She ensures that all EECM's services align with the overarching goal of breaking the cycles of poverty, addiction, and homelessness.

Kellie has taught as an adjunct professor in the University of Pittsburgh's department of physical therapy. Her volunteer work has included service on the boards of Church Union, Foundation of HOPE (Allegheny County Jail), and Three



Rivers Walk to Emmaus; the advisory board of the Seminary's Metro-Urban Institute; and various committees of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the UMC. She is a certified Taekwondo instructor and a founding member and the first president of the Women's Law Association of Duquesne University's School of Law.

RAMONA SPENCER WINS CALIAN AWARD FOR CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICE

As assistant to the academic dean, Ramona Spencer has been cherished by the tightly knit community of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary not only for her work but also for her positive spirit and personal engagement with students and colleagues alike. Earlier this summer, PTS presented Ramona with the Calian Award for Campus Community Service, given to “an exemplary member of the Seminary community who demonstrates excellence in carrying out responsibilities and volunteer assignments and expresses a caring spirit of goodwill and hope essential in life together as a community.”

“You can do administrative ‘stuff’ anywhere,” says Ramona, but “what sets PTS apart is God’s particular people here.” In her official role,

Ramona has often been the first face students see in the Dean’s wing and, in turn, the first to hear their questions and concerns. So besides assisting in the daily operations of the Dean’s office, Ramona has run an unofficial “student support office”—work for which she’s dearly cherished by students and alums. Clearly focused and deeply rooted in her call to be caring and loving, she understands her role as a supporter of seminarians—people who set their lives apart to serve and teach God’s people in the larger community.

And students gratefully remember the times Ramona has “been there,” whether to engage in a deep theological conversation about God’s purpose or, as it was for Chris Taylor ‘19, a weekly chat about *Game of Thrones* and the NFL. For Ramona,

those opportunities are “holy time.” “Her willingness is something we can all learn from,” shares Chris, and, like him, the broader community at PTS appreciates Ramona’s sharing in their times of struggle and of joy. As PTS student Ashley Ashley puts it, “she is love and peace and compassion.”

When asked about how it feels to receive the Calian Award, Ramona responds, “I’m beyond grateful,” then adds that it feels both “honoring and weird.” Why? Because “at PTS, so many people go above and beyond. If you were to put on a blindfold and point randomly at a group picture that includes every staff member, wherever you pointed would picture someone who deserves to win this award.”

Having supported both the Dean’s office and the Doctor of Ministry Program since 2014, Ramona has recently become full-time program coordinator for the latter—an expanded role in which she will continue to serve the vibrant community of PTS with joy and skill.

“You can do administrative ‘stuff’ anywhere, but what sets PTS apart is God’s particular people here. . . . so many people go above and beyond . . . every staff member . . . deserves to win this award.”



On May 31, 2019, we celebrated our 223rd Commencement. Check out photos and videos from the graduation events: www.pts.edu/graduation_2019. During the day’s festivities, the Seminary recognized Ramona Spencer, program coordinator for the Doctor of Ministry Program, with the Calian Award for Campus Community Service, and honored a number of students with graduation awards.





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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL AVAILABLE ONLINE

Again this year Pittsburgh Seminary will observe Advent with an online devotional and resource kit. We invite you to read or listen to daily messages from members of the McMillan Planned Giving Society and Board of Directors. Access the devotionals in these ways:

- » Read online or print and share
- » Receive daily e-mails
- » Follow along on Facebook and Twitter
- » Download our free Android or Apple app
- » Request your printed copy

Visit our website (www.pts.edu) and click on the Resources tab for free worship planning resources and music for your youth to perform. Beginning in January 2020, look for Epiphany and Lenten devotionals. Our Prayer Resource, with additional essays, is now available as a printed book under the title *Toward Bearing One Another's Burdens: Praying with Others through the Challenges of Life*. Look for it on amazon.com.

