

FOR THE LOVE OF LEARNING AND TRAVEL

With gifts in the area of Christian education, M.Div. student Valerie Parm has been faithfully serving the Church for years leading both youth and adult Bible studies. Before coming to seminary, Val completed a year-long ministry training program at Macedonia Baptist Church, the church in which she grew up. It was in that setting that her pastor affirmed Val's gifts for teaching and encouraged her to attend Pittsburgh Seminary to further develop those gifts.

Val is a self-described adventurer who loves to travel and cares deeply about issues of social justice. She has volunteered for disaster relief ministry in the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina as well as in Iowa when devastating floods hit that region. She has also done community organizing around education issues in Ohio.



As a student at PTS, Val has been able to combine her passion for education and her love of travel by going on a mission trip through the World Mission Initiative. Last summer Val was a part of a mission team that went to Ghana. Led by the Rev. Don Dawson, director of Seminary's World Mission Initiative, the group partnered with the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary in Peki, Ghana. There, they participated in the first Annual Mission Conference hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. In preparation for the mission conference the team was asked individually to prepare a message centered on the theme of conference, The Great Commission. "This was one of the most powerful events of my life," says Val. "Especially because it was my first time preaching in a formal ministry setting." Another highlight of the trip was meeting the other seminarians at the seminary in Ghana. "It was a joy to spend time encouraging each other and worshipping together."

The trip to Ghana was a formative experience for Valerie. She gained so much from sharing the love of Christ with people from another country and culture. She was struck by how the Holy Spirit united both groups through mutual teaching, learning, and worship. Val experienced true fellowship with her brothers and sisters in Ghana. Moreover, she feels that they all gained a deeper knowledge about the Great Commission and God's plan for the Good News of the Gospel to reach all the nations. When Valerie reflects on that Sunday morning standing in the narthex of her church where she felt that God was calling her to ministry, she is grateful for the ways that God has opened up opportunities for her at PTS to bridge the Word and the World.

Written July 2012

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