

# MEET PTS



# COUPLE CREDITS SEMINARY FOR SHAPING MISSION AND MINISTRY

The Revs. Cathy '90 and Skip Gillis both give credit to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for shaping their mission and ministry.

Cathy's call happened here at PTS: "When I was visiting the isle of Iona in 1988 God spoke to my heart: 'Braddock,' I heard. Two years earlier I had enrolled as a 'special student' taking courses at PTS, though not pursuing a degree or ordained ministry. But during that first year I sensed God's call to seek ordination. In my first term I took a course about women's experience. And as I reflected on my Christian home and Congregational church as a youth in Brentwood, Mo., I remembered that my pastor had encouraged me to become a minister."

Cathy's coursework in particular opened her heart to follow Jesus' call to ordination:

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"As I learned more of the spiritual truths of ministry in my PTS classes, I realized that God works through biblical teachings and spiritual truths of the saints—and seminary professors. After graduating, I was ordained in 1991 to be the pastor of the First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock."

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Yes, Braddock.

Pittsburgh Seminary's impact on Cathy didn't end with graduation and ordination. She shares, "During my years as a pastor I felt encouraged to further my studies in the Continuing Education Program. This feeling led me to enroll in courses that culminated in a third spiritual pilgrimage to Iona under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Purves. It took place in May 2001, and another member of Pittsburgh Presbytery—one whom I had never met—also participated: the Rev. Gaylord (Skip) Gillis. Love blossomed in Scotland, and we were wed that October at Beulah Presbyterian Church. When we retired, Beulah became our home church."

Indeed, although Skip had graduated from "the other PTS" (Princeton) in 1966, over the years Pittsburgh Theological Seminary would shape him too: "I wound up serving three congregations: Greenville, Elizabeth, and in Sheraden, Pittsburgh's West End. During my study leaves I took classes at PTS. And I worked with PTS students while serving on Pittsburgh Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Through them I discovered the Seminary was educating students to exemplify Christ while serving as pastors, church staff, chaplains, and in ecumenical community-related ministries. And when I married Cathy, PTS became so much more meaningful and important to me. During my retirement years I celebrate the blessing this seminary is to Pittsburgh and the vicinity."

The Gillises' commitment is not limited to the local region, however. Soon after the **World Mission Initiative** was founded, they became generous financial supporters of this crucial program. "We have been pleased to see WMI grow in depth and breadth. Preparing students to be pastors who have an understanding of the mission of the church is very important to us. We serve on the Mission Committee at our home church, and we encourage our congregation and others to emphasize this aspect of our denomination's call to be the church in the world."

Recognizing the vital importance of preparing people for ministry in the way of Jesus around the globe, Cathy and Skip have ensured that their estate includes the Seminary. As Cathy testifies, "I felt prepared for ministry because of the professors who taught and lived their faith in and out of the classroom. Today when I visit the Seminary, I still witness vibrant students sharing their stories, and I see faithful professors fulfilling their calls in this part of God's Kingdom."



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