

MEET PTS



Having “always” been interested in religion and philosophy, Jennifer Hipple '11 came to faith in Christ during her senior year in high school. Interested from that point on in the linguistic, historical, and cultural roots of Judaism and Christianity, she came to Pittsburgh Seminary primed to explore the field of archaeology. “It took me several years after college to get here,” says Jen, “but with the encouragement of key individuals in my life, I eventually made it.”

As a history major at the University of Pittsburgh, Jen added practical Christian service to her academic studies through involvement with social justice ministries such as Bread for the World. After graduating, she spent a year working for AmeriCorps in Pittsburgh and toward the end of that time began living in the home of a woman who was taking classes at PTS. “She’d bring home her seminary books and I’d read them at night,” Jen recalls. “So she told me I should talk with the Seminary’s admissions office, and so did a counselor from the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute.”

But the timing wasn’t quite right. Tragically, Jen’s father died when she was in college, so after AmeriCorps she felt called to move home to Lancaster to be with her family. “My academic interests didn’t go away, though, and I kept waiting for the opportunity to pursue them. A Christian counselor encouraged me not to stay still and wait for God to act, but instead to start moving and see where God would guide me.” So that’s what Jen did—“I finally made the move to apply to PTS, and a scholarship enabled me to enroll in the M.A. program,” she says.

As a student at Pittsburgh Seminary, Jen worked in the **Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology**. “I did a lot of pottery restoration work and seemed to have a knack for it. I also put pieces of jewelry together—beads from the Seminary-sponsored excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim and Bethel, for example. I also did data entry and gave Museum tours,” Jen notes. She even spent two entire summers restoring pottery in the Museum’s lab.

But after graduating from the Seminary, Jen focused on her parallel interest in missional work by participating in the World Christian Discipleship program. She worked part-time as a barista and part-time with the Upper Room church community in Squirrel Hill, where she felt “very planted” and where she stayed past her year with WCD. Then last summer, Jen returned to the Kelso Museum to help with pottery restoration for the new exhibit on the site of Rumeith. That summer service led to a part-time job as assistant curator come the fall, and in December to the position as associate curator upon the retirement of former curator Karen Bowden Cooper.

“I want to use the Museum and its resources to enhance people’s understanding of the Bible and the biblical lands,” says Jen. Part of her vision involves expanding the Museum’s work with local schools and churches, which regularly bring groups of visitors for hands-on experiences of genuine artifacts from the land of the Bible unearthed by a long line of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary professors who also happen to be pioneers in the field of biblical archaeology.

Plan your trip to the Museum! It's free and open to the public Wednesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Bring a group; there's great activities for kids of all ages.

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