

CALLED TO A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

Since the age of 16, MDiv student Kalyn Stewring has felt God calling her to ministry. While at a weekend youth group event at Camp Crestfield a speaker reinforced her calling. “That sent me into a complete panic because I did not, *at all*, ever want to be a pastor,” said Kalyn. She continued ignoring God’s call. But in 2009 she connected with friend Don Dawson, director of the Seminary’s World Mission Initiative, at the New Wilmington Mission Conference.



“For me, NWMC is home. People talk about thin places, where God is so close that it’s as though his robes are filling the temple. NWMC is a thin place for me,” she says. “NWMC is the event that showed a 15-year-old with low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety that God loves us as we are and wants to be in a relationship with us.”

While at the conference held at her undergrad alma mater, Westminster College, Don introduced her to the Seminary’s admissions director Sherry Sparks ’95. Then while attending a Perspectives on the World Christian Movement event, Kalyn says, “I realized that our God is a relentless God, who loves his children and was calling me to love them too.”

Initially drawn to the Seminary’s joint MDiv/MSW program with the University of Pittsburgh—“at PTS it’s a top priority to make sure the two programs at the two schools fit together and complement each other”—she is now focusing on her MDiv work and hopes to pursue her MSW in the future. Before enrolling, Kalyn said that “PTS seemed, and has proven to be, focused on reaching outside the Seminary to the places where many people would rather not go.”

In her two years of service as a Youth Adult Volunteer through the PCUSA—in New Orleans, La., and South Korea—Kalyn realized that ministry does not only mean being a parish ministry. “Ministry is being present with God’s people in many different ways—parish ministry, food justice, social work, and nonprofits. I want to be present with others in their sorrow, joy, anger, and laughter,” she says.

As a first year student here, Kalyn participated in a cross-cultural trip with WMI and had that chance to be present. She traveled to Southeast Asia this past spring. While there the team hosted two of the lead pastors in the people group with whom they were working. The two had not spoken in nearly four years because they disagreed about the use of traditional instruments in worship and the word for Jesus—some wanted the word adopted by their country’s national language and others preferred to use a word in their native tongue. One elder stood up and finally hushed everyone as she said that it didn’t matter what name was used for Jesus, but that they needed to be united, loving each other and sharing the gospel tighter. “When seeing these two men who refused to speak to each other share an embrace, I knew the Holy Spirit was there in that room,” Kalyn says.

Regardless of where God calls her next, Kalyn will be present—listening, talking, laughing, crying, being in others’ lives and sharing the love of Christ. “That’s my call in ministry,” she says.

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