

ARTIST AND PASTOR KAREN ROHRER BEGINS LEADERSHIP OF CHURCH PLANTING INITIATIVE

This month Pittsburgh Theological Seminary welcomes the Rev. Karen Rohrer as our new director of the Church Planting Initiative. Karen comes to the Seminary after serving as organizing co-pastor and co-director of a PC(USA) new church development in Philadelphia: Beacon, which she also helped found. “Beacon is a faith community that strengthens the neighborhood through worship, art, and storytelling,” Karen notes.

“As the daughter of an art teacher in a house full of art projects,” she continues, “I was raised . . . as an artist! I was given creative mentors from the time I was young and found my own artistic medium in words.” Karen practiced her craft of writing and speaking both in college (at the University of Mary Washington, from which she graduated Phi Beta Kappa) and seminary (at Princeton, where she earned her M.Div.). “But at Beacon I found that I couldn’t escape the visual arts so easily! I do love the evocative detail word, but I also love tissue paper flowers and chats around the art table,” says Karen. Prepared as a pastor and trained as an artist, she blends her skills in everything from creative worship services to community development to “learning to be human.”



An award-winning entrepreneur in faith leadership and ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA, Karen also serves as a coach in the denomination’s 1001 New Worshiping Communities initiative—and in her role at Beacon she has mentored several seminary field education students. Additionally, she served as a board member of Philadelphia’s New Kensington Community Development Corporation, whose mission involves working “collectively with the community to promote increased economic development, improved physical environment, and an overall better quality of life for community residents.”

After graduation from seminary, Karen served as a pastoral associate participating in the Pastoral Immersion Program—“a residency for recent seminary graduates who show promise for the entrepreneurial church of the 21st century.” A unique partnership between the Philadelphia’s Broad Street Ministry and Arch Street Presbyterian Church gave her the year-long opportunity to help pastoral teams in three new and revitalizing church contexts to “craft worship identities and experiences that fostered transformative encounters with God and community. While serving in this role, Karen lived in community at Arch Street Presbyterian.

So Karen is precisely prepared to direct our Church Planting Initiative, whose purpose consists in forming and supporting Christian leaders who participate in God’s work of developing new Christian communities and revitalizing existing congregations. Additionally, she’ll support the Seminary’s newly approved Graduate Certificate in Church Planting and Revitalization, a hybrid cohort program beginning in June 2017. Join us in watching for God’s transformative work in the world through Karen’s ministry at PTS!

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