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MTS STUDENT IS ALONG ON THE JOURNEY

Some people receive a calling in a lightning bolt moment; others discern God’s leading through patient prayer. For senior MTS student Karris Jackson, the discernment process was a little different. She explains, “I just kept finding myself on the PTS campus.”

As a college student, when Karris’ faith was taking shape, her desire to better understand the Bible led her to consider seminary. But without someone to explain to her what a seminary education would look like, it never materialized as an option. So she began down a different vocational path: graduate student, teacher, school principal. In the education system, her job focused on working toward justice and equity for Black students. She eventually transitioned to the non-profit world, but her work retained the same focus.

All the while, Karris was active as a volunteer leader in her independent Baptist church. Yet these two parts of her life—justice work and church ministry—seemed to be separate compartments with little, if any, overlap.

That began to change when Karris’ work life drew her, again and again, to the Seminary. First she was asked to attend the Rev. Dr. David Esterline’s installation ceremony as PTS president. Then she visited campus twice to lead workshops about grant-writing for the Seminary’s **Metro-Urban Institute**. Soon she had a meeting with the dean of students. At the same time, it seemed like everyone Karris knew began pursuing theological education, including her sister.

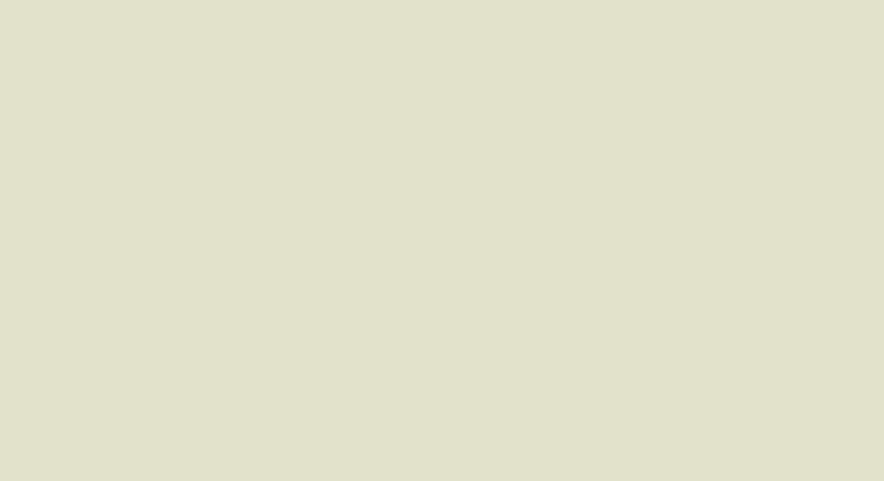
“Sometimes this is the best way for me to figure out where God is leading me,” Karris says with a laugh. “It wasn’t one or two things, but everywhere I looked was seminary and PTS!”

Now entering the final semester of her master of theological studies degree program, Karris is so grateful she sensed and followed that calling.

From the very first day of orientation, she was awed by the variety of theological backgrounds and social locations represented in the student body. Her professors have fostered that diversity by creating space for students to disagree and wrestle with difficult questions. “Rather than trying to give us answers, my professors have invited us along on a journey,” she notes.

Where that journey leads next for Karris seems to be further integration of her work and faith. Her thesis project this semester will focus on biblical interpretation from the margins—an exploration of how people read Scripture outside America’s dominant white culture. Beyond graduation, Karris plans to pursue a doctorate . . . after spending some time with her daughter, who will be entering her senior year of high school.

As Karris continues to work in both non-profit and lay ministry settings, her seminary studies will enrich her efforts. “The Bible is God’s word to us today,” she says. “How will we read it and use it as we face the pressing crises of our world?”



Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
616 North Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-362-5610



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