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CALLED TO CHAPLAINCY

Twenty years ago, seminary is the last place that chaplain Kathy Hartzell '21 thought she would ever be.

Settled into a career in customer service management, Kathy noticed that a small nudge toward ministry was developing into a full sense of calling. After learning about the work of a hospice grief counselor, she wondered, "How can I get to do that?"

Ultimately, Kathy realized she could combine two of her related passions—counseling and spirituality—in chaplaincy ministry. But turning this new dream to a reality would require work. Namely, it would require a seminary degree and ordination.

And so she, with active partnership from her husband, Paul, took on a Herculean task: obtain an MDiv degree in Pittsburgh while still working full-time in her hometown of Cleveland. During her first semester here, twice a week the couple would pack dinners, drive to Pittsburgh, heat up their food in a break room microwave, then Kathy would attend evening class while Paul read a book or strolled around campus. Then, of course, the late-night drives home.

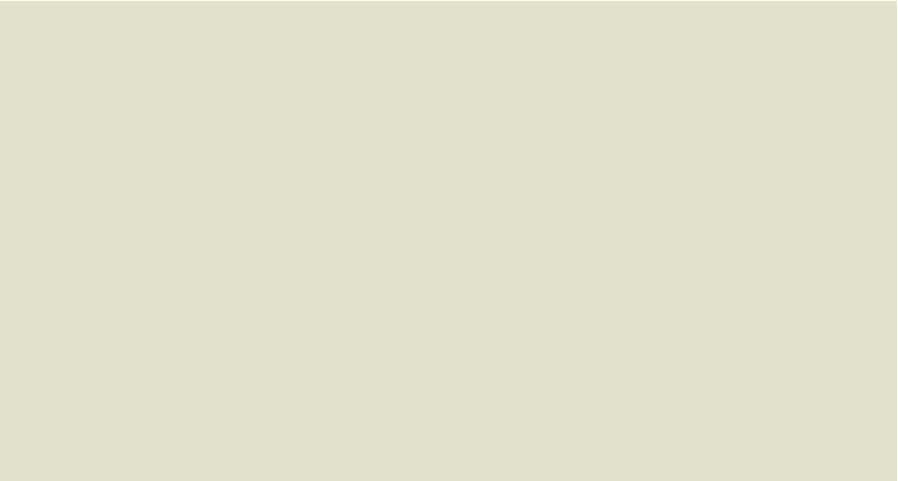
Every step of the way, Kathy was grateful for God's provision. "God graced me every step of the way," she says, "to make my seminary education possible."

For the rest of her semesters at PTS, Kathy split time between the two cities, living in Pittsburgh three days per week. During her Friday-to-Monday stints in Cleveland, she completed a chaplaincy training at the Cleveland Clinic. This experience confirmed for Kathy that she was indeed pursuing her true calling. Her supervisor was an imam, and she worked alongside Catholic, Orthodox, and Baptist ministers, among others. She knew this was a great reflection of the diversity of chaplaincy work itself, since people in the hospital are from all faith backgrounds, beliefs, and practices.

"One of the first things I learned as a chaplain," she explains, "was not to talk churchy. I just offer my presence. I walk into each room praying that the Holy Spirit will guide me."

For her field education at PTS, Kathy wanted to expand her chaplaincy horizons beyond hospital settings, so she worked at the Allegheny County Jail. Her experience was somewhat limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, but she was able to minister to many incarcerated people in pastoral care visits.

Now graduated, Kathy has recently accepted a one-year chaplaincy residency at the Cleveland VA. Meanwhile, she is pursuing both her PC(USA) ordination and her chaplaincy board certification. We are so proud of Kathy for her faithful ministry!



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