

## JOINT MDIV/MSW STUDENT PLANS TO ASSIST FAMILIES WITH HEALTHCARE

Lance Hershberger has completed his first year of the social work portion of his joint **MDiv/MSW** degree with Pittsburgh Seminary and the University of Pittsburgh. Born and raised in the small mid-western town of Dover, Ohio, Lance experienced a call to ministry around middle school.

“When I realized the call, I told all my family and all my friends. They thought I was weird and so did I, but it seemed beautiful and unavoidable.”

Lance pursued studies in Bible and theology at Malone University. There he learned about the many kinds of Christians and interpretations and it rocked his philosophical world view. He also learned that seminary was an actual place and a necessary step for preparing him to answer his call. “I needed to go somewhere that was a part of city, affordable, academically respectable,” he said.



Pittsburgh Theological Seminary was on that list. After completing the **World Christian Discipleship program** through the Seminary’s World Mission Initiative and beginning to grow in understanding what it means to be a missionary to the community, Lance felt seminary was still for him. His three years at PTS taught him, through field placements and study, how to be with people as they navigate issues of ultimate concern: death, salvation, life, trust, love, and hope.

Yet, it wasn’t enough. Lance decided he wanted other disciplines to accompany his studies. Social work was a natural option—a chance to learn to intervene in communities and with individuals.

“Social work is great in that it’s uniquely committed to serving the poor and vulnerable in this society. And I think that’s a good match with the church and following Jesus—feeding and helping the poor and empowering the vulnerable.”

With a deep concern for a person’s and a family’s holistic healing, Lance wants to be a licensed clinical social worker in some form of health care setting, helping families overcome their significant barriers to accessing healthcare. He feels called to be one of the people who sits with them, listens to them, and is on their team.

“Seminary prepared me to sit with people as they wrestle with faith and life. In the healthcare world there is a need for that. As Frederick Buechner said, ‘The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ So, that is where I will go.”

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