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FREE FROM OBSTACLES, FOLLOWING GOD’S PATH

When M.Div. student Rebecca (Becky) Konegen graduates from PTS this spring, she will be among the class of students who experienced pandemic disruption for all three years of their seminary studies. Despite those challenges, Becky insists her journey to pastoral ministry has been relatively free of obstacles.

In 2019, not long after moving to Pittsburgh, Becky was searching for a new path in life. Years ago in Southern California she had been working toward a Ph.D. in English when a difficult pregnancy and other obstacles led her to pause that pursuit. Eventually the pause became an ending, and she found herself grieving the loss of things she had long hoped for and worked for.

So she sought guidance from her church and pastors. One of her pastors, Karen Slusser '21 of St. Paul's UMC in Allison Park, Pa., helped Becky process her grief and discern a new path. Remarking on Becky's deep engagement of biblical texts in studies at the church, Karen wondered if God was calling Becky to full-time ministry.

Like many people, Becky assumed a call to ministry was supposed to come in the form of a lightning bolt of revelation. But Karen helped her discover that her call appeared more like the soft glow of a single candle. "Some people see obstacles as essential to their call story," Becky reflects, "but for me the *lack* of obstacles is affirmation that I'm on the correct path. Things just keep falling into line."

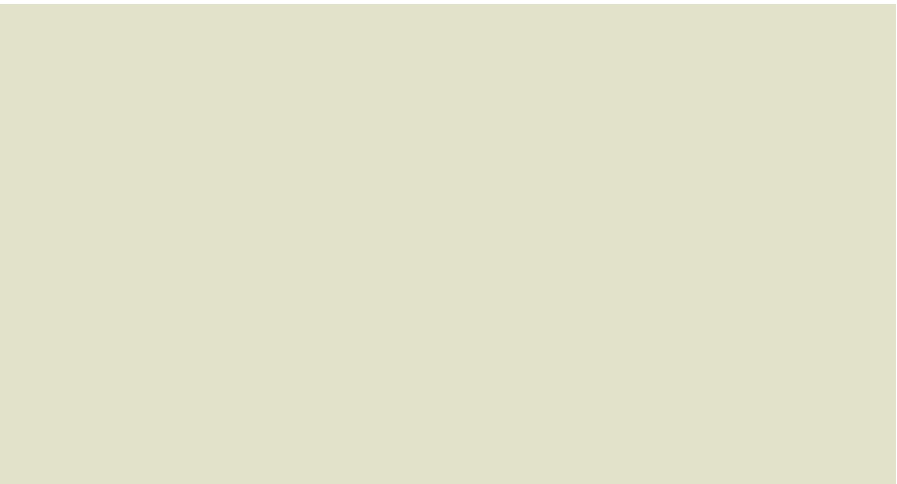
And fall into line quickly they did. In one month—August 2019—Becky applied to PTS, took a tour of campus, was offered a scholarship, and began classes. Three years later, Becky reflects on what she has loved most about Pittsburgh Seminary:

"I definitely treasure the easy access to professors, particularly with the sensitive issues we deal with in seminary. You're examining the ground you walk on, trying to figure out what's stable, what holds and what doesn't, and you need those connections and support. I love chapel too—the church in the round, the liturgy, the speakers, the music."

Following graduation, Becky intends to pursue ordination and service in full-time pastoral ministry in The United Methodist Church. Since July 2021, she has been serving as the minister at Epworth UMC in Allison Park, Pa.

Being a pastor allows Becky to creatively apply the advanced knowledge of textual analysis she first learned as a Ph.D. candidate studying medieval and Renaissance literature. "I like to experience texts sensorily," she says. "I like to get people sitting in a Bible story: how does it feel to be *in* the story? Sitting with Jesus, walking through the desert; what's it like to *be* there? I realize that doesn't come to everyone naturally, but it does for me and I enjoy inviting others to explore texts in that way."

Becky also enjoys knitting, gardening, and of course, reading—not only for class, but also for fun. Lately she's made a habit of ending every day with naturalist readings, the latest of which was *Vesper Flights* by Helen MacDonald. And whether it's reading or following God's path, she won't let any obstacles get in her way.



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



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