

PTS COMMUNITY MOURNS THE LOSS OF SHERRY SPARKS

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is mourning the loss of the Rev. Sherry Sparks '95 who served as associate dean of admissions before retiring in late 2012 after 14 years of service. Sherry died May 27, 2015, following her battle with cancer. "She will be remembered by both staff and alums as a loving and encouraging person, always upbeat and hopeful," said the Rev. Dr. William J. Carl III, president and professor of homiletics at PTS.

In her role at the Seminary, Sherry was able to combine her two loves: students and the Church. In her work here, she assisted some 2,000 students in discerning their call to ministry. Her previous professional experience provided the perfect mix of skills to be able to follow her own calling to this specialized ministry for which she was awarded the Seminary's Distinguished Alumna Award in 2013.



Sherry was a graduate of Carlow University (B.A., and Duquesne University (M.M.Ed.), and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (M.Div.). For nearly 40 years she worked in the education system first in the private school system as a vice principal and music teacher; then on the college level in admissions, student development, pastor care; and then on the seminary level again in admissions.

A lifetime of music training and performance—and a sense that music and worship are not separable—allowed for profound and joyful experiences in choral, instrumental, and worship leadership. She once said, "Music was the spiritual bridge that was the path to seminary and pastoral leadership for me." She provided musical settings for a number of psalms, some of which were used for jubilee and ordination celebrations. On campus she was a member of the Sparkettes, a small choral group who would perform for special occasions.

Concurrent to her involvement in education was her service to the Church. Three years after her ordination in 1995, Sherry began serving Beechview United Presbyterian Church as stated supply. In addition, she was a member of the Racial and Social Justice Unit of the Pittsburgh Presbytery as well as Synod Women's Ministry Unit in the Synod of the Trinity. A life-long passion for peace and justice issues led Sherry to train with the national church in refugee issues and resettlement of Bosnian refugees during the Balkans war. Additionally she participated in Middle East peacemaking trip—led by PTS alumnus Darrel Yeaney '56—that included a visit to Jordan, Palestine, and Israel under the auspices of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches.

In other service, Sherry was a member of the Presbyterian Association of College Chaplains and Campus Ministers as well as a member of the Institutional Review Board for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pediatrics.

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