

## LIGHTER, WISER, AND MORE PREPARED

"I feel a bit lighter, a bit wiser, and a lot more prepared for when people will come into my office," said Sally Henry, a senior M.Div. student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

For 10 weeks this summer, Sally completed her clinical pastoral education at Shadyside Hospital in Pittsburgh. Required by some PCUSA presbyteries, CPE brings theological students and ministers into supervised encounter with persons in critical life situations. Out of intense involvement with persons in need and the reaction from peers and supervisors, the students develop new awareness of themselves as persons and of the needs of those to whom ministry is offered.

"It was a really stretching, and at times difficult process, but it was totally worth it," says Sally. "You get out of it as much as you put into it, and I invested heavily."



Sally learned about herself, ministry, and God while visiting with those in the hospital. Now more aware of her own emotional issues, she explains, "I can't expect someone else to go someplace emotionally that I'm not willing to go myself." She also observed that a patient's facing one challenge in life often triggers unresolved issues from another emotional experience, either for the patient or the pastor. For instance, Sally met with a cancer patient who was reminded of her own mother's stay in the hospital and eventual death, which the patient had never really grieved. "Pastoral care isn't always about God stuff. A lot of the time you have to talk through a bunch of emotional stuff with the patient - and sometimes acknowledge some of your own junk before you can ever bring God into the situation."

Through her studies at PTS and her time ministering through CPE, Sally has been bridging the Word and the world. "When ministering to the scared and hurting, we are God's representative in the room. We are the non-anxious presence who can bring light to a dark place and time, and bring words of hope and healing when there seems to be none." For Sally, CPE was life-changing.

Written September 2011

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