

SHANA HUTCHINGS QUOTES, "ALL SERIOUS DARING STARTS FROM WITHIN."

Meet PTS M.Div. student Shana Hutchings. Here is her story in her own words.

One of my favorite quotations—one that has given me, as a quiet person, a lot of comfort through the years—is from Eudora Welty. Her stories focus almost entirely on small-town life in her native Mississippi. She writes about growing up in a loving family and living a very average life. She says, “A sheltered life can be a daring life as well. For all serious daring starts from within.”

I have found her statement to be true in my own life—the “daring within” is how I experienced God’s call. But for me that was only the beginning. What has affirmed my call, again and again, leading me here to PTS, are the voices from outside urging the “daring within” to press on.



In 2005, a pastor asked me to serve as a Christian Education director at his church. This pastor took the time to sit with me over lunch and talk informally about ministry. That conversation caused me to consider that I could actually work in a church someday—that maybe, just maybe, I was called to serve in the church.

Two years later my daughter was born seven weeks early. I spent two weeks with her in the NICU. There, not only did I feel God holding our family, but I also saw the hurt which engulfed that place, and I felt empowered to be with people through acts of presence and listening. It was the beginning, really, of my call to ministry.

What finally brought me to Pittsburgh Seminary, though, was a conversation with a PTS graduate, my dear friend Sarina. We weren’t talking about ministry, but motherhood. At the time, I was happy in the quite demanding role of stay-at-home mom. I still thought I would attend seminary, but later. I was also expecting our second child, and I definitely didn’t think I would start seminary with two children. When I casually mentioned to Sarina that I’d recently visited the PTS website, she informed me, very seriously, “Shana, you’ve got to go to Seminary. Normal people don’t visit seminary websites.” Really? And that was it. I applied to PTS and started that fall.

Now in my final year, I have been confirmed in my call to ministry countless times as a seminary student. We welcomed our third child during my second year here, and I can say with confidence that we’ve not only survived, but really thrived in this community. Now pregnant with our fourth child, I am completing my field education placement at Frankfort Presbyterian Church in Hookstown, Pa. When I came to PTS, I was interested in chaplaincy work, but the small-church setting is calling me with a force I hadn’t anticipated. I love the spontaneous pace of the place, along with the intergenerational necessity of small churches.

I cannot say for certain where God will call me, but I can say that I would be thrilled to serve in a traditional church setting. I am truly blessed to be part of a school that has a tradition of ministering in the name of Jesus for his ongoing work in the world.

Written May 2014

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



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