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MDIV STUDENT PURSUES GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN URBAN MINISTRY ON ROAD TO PROVIDING FAITH-BASED THERAPY

Though for more than two decades Sonya-Marie Morley provided customer-facing service, including case management with diverse populations, she never felt able to “drive necessary change in positive and transformative ways.” During that time, she also lost two sons—one to pre-term labor and one to miscarriage. “A licensed clinical social worker named Eileen introduced my husband, Nathaniel, and me to other parents whose children had died, and through those relationships God opened the grave of my soul and renewed God’s spirit within me,” she says.

Because Eileen’s faith and that of the parents in the infant bereavement group inspired Sonya-Marie to live and hope again, she began her seminary program intending to earn a joint **M.Div./MSW degree**. But while serving as an intern in a small, Presbyterian church, she developed a love for congregational ministry.

“My internship helped me understand that I would prefer providing faith-based therapy to married couples and families in a congregational setting,” she notes.

Sonya-Marie’s discernment process has led her to the new goals of pursuing trauma certification and a master’s in marriage and family therapy after seminary. “My own healing is a miracle from God. I want to walk closely alongside others seeking healing,” she adds.

Toward that end, Sonya-Marie is participating in the **Metro-Urban Institute Fellows program** this year and is earning her **M.Div. and Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry**. In her field placement with Pittsburgh’s Zone 5 Police Department, she’s continuing to discover more ways in which God is at work in the world. She is also prayerfully considering how best to use her gifts as she joins in God’s healing, reconciling, transforming activity. “My denominationally and theologically diverse classmates at PTS have opened my eyes to new ways of seeing and understanding God,” notes Sonya-Marie. “They have modeled faithful behavior by ministering to me through a protracted season of losses in my life. They’ve motivated and inspired me with their spiritual maturity and grace. And they have challenged me to live abundantly into my call to fight for justice.”

A lifelong lover of literature, Sonya-Marie has felt particularly drawn to Psalm 147:3, “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” It reminds her of a quote from Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*: “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.” Sonya-Marie says, “With God’s help, I would like the great honor and blessing of helping others become ‘strong at the broken places.’”

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