

How does one graduate Pittsburgh Theological Seminary without being missionally minded? The truth is, one doesn't. From the frequent conversations with the World Mission Initiative staff to the incredible opportunities to serve around the globe to the required Missiology class with Dr. Sunquist, one simply cannot graduate from PTS without a missional focus. After all, many argue that the church exists for mission that the whole world may know and worship God. In that case, why *wouldn't* we be missionally minded?

The reality that I am facing is that not all churches are missionally-focused. This is something that I've always known logically, of course, but didn't quite grasp until post-graduation. Outside of the protective black gates of the lush green campus where theological thoughts flower regardless of the snow, the reality is that many churches don't think critically about or prioritize missions. Mission is just another program. Mission is just another cause for a committee. Many of our churches haven't been taught to think about mission as vital to Christ's work in the world. In fact, many of our churches haven't been taught to think about anything going on outside the church building let alone in their surrounding neighborhood and the world!

Now I find myself as a missionally-minded pastor serving a loving, compassionate, big-hearted congregation with whom I'm developing a heart for missions. This is a phenomenal challenge. On one hand, it seems everybody instructs me to challenge the congregation with new opportunities for missional experience and knowledge. On the other hand, it likewise seems that everybody advises me to take it slow, remind me that the church isn't going to become 100% missionally focused overnight. I find myself in the ultimate balancing act.

My goal these past nine months has been to seek this missional balance. I prayerfully discern when to challenge the flock, and when to take it slow. Sometimes I'm on target and sometimes I'm off-base. Often I am astounded by how the church rises to the missional challenges placed before them. This past December the church welcomed three foreign-exchange students into their homes for Christmas break. What an act of hospitality! At other times I find myself heartbroken. After months of encouraging the church, my husband and I found ourselves attending the WMI Mission Conference alone. Not a single parishioner took advantage of this blessed opportunity. Hence, we find a balance. Sometimes it's my call to challenge; sometimes it's my call to take it slow. Sometime's I get discouraged, but a lot of the time I find great joy. With prayer, encouragement and patience, this is my life as a missional pastor.