

## ALUMNI RESPONSES TO COVID-19

### Community-Focused & Counseling

- **Tom Russell (M.Div. '80)** and his wife (**Anne Russell, MRE '80**) had a great opportunity for outreach during this crisis. They felt led to go to the outside of different homes in their neighborhood to pray. At front doors they placed oil on the doorposts and interceded for their protection and blessing. In the end, by request, they prayed for over 65 homes. It was amazing to see how open people were to prayer. Many weren't Christians, and many were complete strangers. Often, they shared other needs, such as healing for health problems, job loss and marital issues. Tom and Anne got to pray for these as well.

Tom is an ACNA priest, so he wore his collar and stole, which turned out to be a meaningful sight for people. They found that non-Christians as well as Christians were very open to what they did, and Tom and Anne were blessed by this special ministry as well. Please pray for them for future connections with these people.

- **Jack Good (MRE '70)** is serving on two committees of the Essex County Community Foundation. One committee is dealing with making recommendations for where the COVID19 Funds should be used in Essex County and the other committee is dealing with "the new normal;" an interesting exercise in what is going to be different after the Pandemic and how things will be done differently. He is also working with the Cumming's Foundation and the Lutz Foundation, which is anchored at Beverly Hospital.
- **David Mercadante (D.Min. '19)** and his rural congregation committed to providing food assistance to their community during the COVID outbreak. In normal times, they have a once-a-week, sit down meal that draws about 75 people. It is a great way to engage folks, most of whom are economically disadvantaged. Since the shut-down, they offer hot meals in to-go containers for folks to get "drive-thru" style. People are very grateful for the food and it has provided an open door to talk about the Gospel and have prayer with people in their community who are otherwise unchurched. It has been a great way to engage the community for Christ!
- **Dee Swilling (D.Min. '01)** and her church distribute both fresh and non-perishable food to over 50 families per week. Each family can come every other week, so the total number of families served is over 100 per month. This effort requires over 35 volunteers who serve on a rotating basis. Food is collected at various food stores, volunteers also shop for food, and pick up food from the greater Boston Food Bank. Their food pantry has been in place for over 15 years. Recently, they have received a lot of help from members in the community to help with food pick up and distribution, which has led to great community partnerships.
- **Lori Wiley (M.Div. '01)** and her husband turned a portion of their country property into a Place of Prayer open to the public dawn to dusk, all outside. It has a Prayer Path with Stations based on

# Alumni

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Richard Foster's book (used in her first GCTS course, Spiritual Formation). It has a Circle of Prayer based on Mark Batterson's book. Other features: Biblical Garden (plants named in the Bible), Prayer Wall (based on Jerusalem Wailing Wall), Prayer Garden for meditation, Prayer Chair, and more. All outside with plenty of room for social distancing. Please visit!

[www.placeofprayerbedfordnh.org](http://www.placeofprayerbedfordnh.org)

[placeofprayerbedfordnh@gmail.com](mailto:placeofprayerbedfordnh@gmail.com)

Facebook: Place of Prayer Bedford NH

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- **Steve Macchia (M.Div. '83, D.Min. '01)** All of his main programs (Pierce/GCTS, Selah/LTI and Emmaus/LTI) have pivoted online during COVID-19. They've also offered several new online workshops, soul care retreats, and webinars on various spiritual formation topics. In addition, they are providing online retreat guides for individual and group use. Their online store, [spiritualformationstore.com](http://spiritualformationstore.com) is filled with several hundred books, audio guides, and additional resources. Visit [www.LeadershipTransformations.org](http://www.LeadershipTransformations.org) for more information.
- **Stephen Samuel (M.Div. '95)** and his church have made the transition of services being conducted online. Though this pandemic has been painful and challenging, through this experience, the Lord has accelerated their church's move toward digital media and online giving. He is grateful for the people, wisdom, and cooperation God has given to their congregation to help them adapt to this present reality. Social media stats lead them to think that they may be reaching more people through these digital means than before.
- **Cindy Minnich (MATS '90)** works for the Salvation Army as a Special Events & Communications Coordinator. They have suspended their services except for emergency food assistance.
- **Peter Conwell Richards (MAR '84)** and his wife Jane, walk around their neighborhood to ask neighbors if they have anything for which can pray for them. Many are thankful.
- **Lenny Anderson (M.Div. '00)** and his church modified their food pantry to car delivery as the pandemic ramped up. It was just in time as many local pantries closed and people lost their jobs. Now they have people making masks to hand out as well.
- **Elizabeth Ostling (MASF '17)** was one of about 80 musicians in the Boston Pops to individually record John Williams' "Summon the Heroes" at home, in honor of our heroic COVID-19 healthcare workers and first responders. The video is accessible on YouTube [HERE](#).
- **Rick Armstrong (D.Min. '03)** serves part-time as Ministry Care Coordinator and sees clients 3 days a week and directs the Ministerial Assistance Program Clinical supervisor. They are continuing to see clients virtually. Most of them have a fairly full load. They are also offering support groups and resources online.

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- **John Easterling (M.Div. '75)** teaches four classes currently online with forum discussions, voice-threaded power point slides, occasional videos and zoom. He is also doing some writing.
- **Ralph Ritter (M.Div. '83)** and his wife Carolyn are still teaching for the Olney Christian School – from home.

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To view additional responses, please visit [gordonconwell.edu/alumni/covid-19-responses](https://gordonconwell.edu/alumni/covid-19-responses).