

Alumni Spotlight: Bill Martin (MAME '05—Hamilton)



Current title: Initiative Leader, Metro SenWest Initiative, Converge International Ministries

Family: wife, Kathy and 4 children: 3 sons (1 in heaven) and 1 daughter

Favorite professor: Dr. Timothy Tennent

Favorite class: Greek with Dr. Keazirian (like math)

Favorite memory: the summer of 2003 when we went to Zimbabwe as a family with 3 other Gordon-Conwell students on the Overseas Missions Practicum

Where are you currently serving as a missionary and what is your work there?

I live in Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. It's the westernmost point of the entire African continent. My role for the past 2-1/2 years has been the leader of the Metro SenWest Initiative, a kind of umbrella for the seven different ministry projects Converge has here. That role involves leading our team of 4 couples as well as recruiting others to join us. Prior to that, from 2008 when we first arrived in Dakar, my primary ministry was reaching university students through teaching English as a foreign language and inviting those interested to study the Bible.



Tell us about your path from your Gordon-Conwell graduation to now. Have you always been a missionary, or did you serve in other positions before becoming a missionary?

I am a second-career missionary. Before becoming a missionary, I worked as an electrical engineer and later engineering manager for a total of 18 years. We were appointed as missionaries with Converge

International Ministries in June of 2005, just a month after I graduated from Gordon-Conwell. We raised support for two years, then went to Quebec for one year to begin learning French. We arrived in Senegal in August of 2008.

How has God woven together your time at Gordon-Conwell with other life events to lead you to where you are now?

The OMP to Zimbabwe in the summer of 2003 was very significant for me and our family. We did it together as a family, my wife and me with our four children, aged 18 months to 9 years old. Zimbabwe is about 90% Christian, but there is a great need for training pastors and Christian leaders there. We had a burden to serve among unreached people, so we knew Zimbabwe wasn't a long-term destination for us, but

it was a good introduction to Africa in many ways. In February of 2005, as I was taking my last class in my MA program, my wife and I participated in a Missionary Assessment week run by Converge International Ministries. It was there that we first heard about Senegal and learned a little about the largest people group here, the Wolof, who are unreached, with only 150 believers among a population of seven million.

What do you love about your work? What are some of the hard things about life as a missionary in your context?

I love getting to know people here in Senegal, both Muslims and Christians. The Senegalese people are known for their hospitality, and it's a well-deserved reputation. I also enjoy working together with other missionaries toward common goals.

One of the hardest things about life as a missionary is being away from family. With our youngest now in college, we're empty nesters. Most of our interaction with our adult children and our brothers and sisters happens via Zoom. Another thing that is difficult is what I call "cross-cultural fatigue," just the cumulative stress of living and working in a different culture where there are different ways of doing things, different expectations, and so on. Also, Senegal is 95% Muslim, and there have been very few coming to Christ over the 60+ years of gospel witness here, particularly among the two largest ethnic groups. So, lack of evident fruit is discouraging.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work? Or what has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence?

My time at Gordon-Conwell gave me a good foundation in what's involved in serving cross-culturally. Also, the persistence required for me to complete my degree going to school part-time while working full-time was good practice for working as a missionary in a place where response to the Gospel is very limited.

What piece of advice would you give to alumni who are considering the mission field?

First, seek God's will earnestly in prayer, in His Word and in consultation with mature brothers and sisters in Christ. Second, consider how many opportunities people in your community have to hear and respond to the Gospel. Compare that to the country where you're considering serving. Then, ask yourself, where does God want to use me in His Kingdom work?

Links:

About Converge: <https://converge.org/missions>

About the Metro SenWest Initiative: <https://youtu.be/egNzwtJugFA>

About internship programs in Senegal: <https://youtu.be/UWu3mRo0GFY>