

Alumni Spotlight: Kyle Wisdom (M.Div. '08)



Current Title: Deputy Coordinator for Engaging Humanitarian Islam, WEA Office of Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations

Family: Koko (Courtney) Wisdom, current MA student at Gordon-Conwell, and three children.

Favorite professor: Tim Tennent, Scott Hafemann

Favorite class: Various global theology courses

Favorite memory: Having close community with other students while living on the South Hamilton campus.

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

I'm currently living in Orlando while I finish my Ph.D. and I am working with the World Evangelical Alliance. I'm completing my Ph.D. on political philosophy and Indonesian Islam.



Left: Kyle with his wife, Courtney, at the launch of the book he just co-authored (2021, see below for details)

Have you always been a cross-cultural worker, or did you serve in other positions before ministering overseas?

I have long felt a call to serve the church and help people. While I was an undergraduate at Wheaton, I was involved in World Christian Fellowship, a campus ministry that focused on praying for the global church. At the time, I expected to become a pastor and serve in a local church. During my time at Gordon-Conwell an idea began to crystalize of how to combine my interest in pastoral ministry and love of the global church. I decided to pursue serving the global church through pastoring an international church. Upon graduation, I moved overseas with my family, and we served in Indonesia for 11 years. I worked as a pastor, as a seminary professor, and with Indonesian Christian organizations to support churches and train future Indonesian leaders. Along the way I developed friendships with people from other faiths and became interested in learning more about the majority religion, Islam. I began a Ph.D. program to continue learning, and it has been a rewarding journey so far. This led to opportunities for broader interfaith work around issues of religious freedom.

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

Completing an M.Div. at Gordon-Conwell gave me a solid foundation for future study, but it was the relationships with other students and staff that were the greatest blessing. Tim Tennent and the OMP program he developed gave me an opportunity to candidate at an international church in Indonesia before our family moved. I received a scholarship to repay some of my student loans from Gordon-Conwell, which made it possible to begin serving overseas without a long delay.

What do you love about your work?

I love learning new things and meeting new people. My current role with the World Evangelical Alliance and research for my Ph.D. has put me on a fascinating path of interfaith work with respected people from a variety of religious traditions and cultures. I love serving the global church, though it is now in a more indirect way. The World Evangelical Alliance represents over 600 million Christians around the world in 120 nations. I'm proud to be a part of working alongside Christians from Africa, Europe and Asia. I especially appreciate the desire to advocate for the persecuted church and alleviate unnecessary suffering.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

I'm thankful for my well-rounded education and training for ministry. My M.Div. served me well in pastoral ministry. Doing the hard work of learning Greek and Hebrew certainly helped with learning additional languages. The Wilson Center, which was led by Doug and Jeanie Birdsall, was a great encouragement and they were wonderful mentors to my wife and I while we were in South Hamilton. I think the focus on the global church and my classes with Tim Tennent had the greatest impact. It was a joy to study alongside students from other nations and read theology and reflections from non-western contexts. I had limited exposure to these conversations before seminary, but my knowledge and interest was greatly intensified and expanded while at Gordon-Conwell. Being close to the Center for the Study of World Christianity was another great resource for which I have great appreciation.

What piece of advice would you give to alumni who are considering serving cross-culturally?

I'd say great job, keep up the good work. For those who are able, learning from local leaders is invaluable. I have learned so much from mature Indonesian leaders who have such a deeper understanding of how to lead and engage within their contexts.

Publications and Links:

I'd like to share about a recent publication from an interfaith project I am currently working on with the World Evangelical Alliance. The WEA has formed an ongoing [joint working group](#) with the world largest Muslim organization using the English term Humanitarian Islam. This summer (2021) we announced a jointly published book titled [God Needs No Defense: Reimagining Muslim-Christian Relations in the 21st Century](#). The volume was released at a book launch held at The Nation's Mosque in Washington DC around the [International Religious Freedom Summit](#) co-convened by former ambassador for religious freedom Sam Brownback. I was glad to be able to contribute a chapter to the volume.

The event has also received international press coverage from a variety of perspectives. Christianity Today wrote a piece titled, "[Christian and Muslim Leaders Agree on the Legitimacy of Evangelism](#)". Religion Unplugged framed it as "[The World's Largest Muslim Organization Just Honored Evangelicals](#)". A political analyst described how a "[Muslim-Evangelical Alliance Strives to Create Religious and Political Middle Ground](#)". A recognized expert on Islam from Germany contrasted the [WEA's more fruitful approach with the Vatican's tactic of dialogue](#). This ongoing, joint working group I am currently serving on is part of a larger effort for religious freedom and peace where Muslims and Christians can have peaceful relations without minimizing truth claims or downplaying the important of evangelism.