

## Alumni Spotlight: Ben Ruhl (MDiv '17)



**Current Title:** Lead Pastor; BeFree Community Church in Alton, NH

**Family:** Wife, Olivia Ruhl (MAR '17); Davie (3 yrs.), Baby boy (due March 2022)

**Favorite professor:** Scott Gibson

**Favorite class:** From Text to Sermon

**Favorite memory:** Falling in love with my wife... does that count?

### **What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and where are you serving now?**

After graduating from Gordon-Conwell in 2017, my wife and I moved to Alton, New Hampshire where I pastor BeFree Community Church. After pastoring here in Alton for a little over four years, we have come to love this church and town. Alongside my pastoral ministry, I am a part of the leadership team for [Small Town Summits](#). We work to hosts events and create content that will resource and revalue ministry in the small places of New England.

### **What do you love about your work? What are the particular joys and challenges of serving a rural church?**

I love my rural church. When I arrived here, I was only 28 years old, with no full-time ministry experience. Yet they embraced me and gave me the space to grow. It didn't take long for them to feel like family. They welcomed my wife and I (and later our kids) as their own right from the start.

What I love most about the work God has given me here is getting to see people become re-enchanted by the glory of the Gospel and reawakened regularly to the eternal truth that the good news of Christ's redemption and reign is truly *good*. The work is hard, but Christ is worth it, even in small towns.

### **How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?**

Few churches will be able to offer the level of in-depth theological education a seminary can, and no seminary will ever be able to offer the spiritual care and personal shepherding a church can. That's ok, but it's a reminder to us that the seminary and the church must work hand in hand in forming the next generation of pastors. While Gordon-Conwell gave me the opportunity to receive full-time, in-depth, biblical and

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theological education, if it wasn't for the local church and the mentored ministry I did there, I do not believe I would be equipped to be a pastor today.

While studying at Gordon-Conwell, I served as the pastoral intern at Pepperell Christian Fellowship in Pepperell, Massachusetts. In this context I was able to put my seminary education into practice under the supervision of a mentor who guided and coached me along the way. It wasn't just my mentor that shaped me in those years, but the people of that church, who I worshiped and grew alongside. They showed me what it looked like to be a part of the body of Christ.

## **What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence on your ministry?**

I heard a professor at Gordon-Conwell mention, in an offhanded comment, that the best thing a pastor could do to prepare for pastoral ministry was get a ThD. I (internally) rolled my eyes. I was busy just trying to survive Hebrew.

Though I still don't have a ThD, I can now see where my professor was coming from. I have the responsibility to spiritually care for and shepherd the flock of God that he has given me. I have the weighty joy to stand before them each week and unpack God's all sufficient Word to them. I have the privilege to apply it to their lives in moments of personal discipleship and counseling. *A task this weighty deserves to be rigorously prepared for.* I do not think I would have been made ready for that task without my Gordon-Conwell education. The seminary gave me the tools I needed to pastorally care for my people and help my people treasure Christ.

## **What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are just entering pastoral ministry?**

Root yourself in Jesus Christ. Ministry will give you highs and lows, but you serve a God in whom your delight need never waver. "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). Never stop plumbing the glorious depths of the riches of his Word for your own sake and the sake of the flock.

## **Publications and Links:**

You can find out more about Small Town Summits, read our articles and listen to our podcast at [www.smalltownsummits.com/](http://www.smalltownsummits.com/). We pray that our ministry helps pastors and lay leaders across New England see that their ministry to small and forgotten places is worth it. All glory be to Christ!