

Alumni Spotlight: Kathleen Blackey (MDiv '09)



Current Title: Co-Pastor of First Baptist Church of South Londonderry

Family: Husband: Chris (MDiv '09); Children: Sarah (12), Daniel (10), Priscilla (5)

Favorite Professor: Dr. Kang

Favorite Class: Preaching for Modern Listeners

Favorite memory: Drinking coffee late at night with our Soul Care group talking about theology.

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

My husband, Chris, and I have been co-pastoring at First Baptist Church of South Londonderry in Vermont since February 2010. I have also been working for American Baptist Churches of Vermont and New Hampshire doing communications, and I have done some fundraising support for Northern Baptist Education Society. Most recently I have also started working for Fresh Expressions as Coordinator of Communications and Strategic Initiatives.

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

I love pastoring in a small town particularly in one that my husband and I have committed to serving for a long time. I'm grateful to serve in a church where I can not only preach in the pulpit but also make meals for families with newborns. I've had the flexibility of working part time, so I can also be home with my children. I have the opportunity to walk through the beautiful and messy parts of people's faith journey. I have learned how to embrace those areas where God has called me to get outside my comfort zone. I thank God that He called me where He did.



Chris and I have walked through some particularly difficult times with our congregation. Just six months into our time with the church the 186-year-old building was destroyed by a fire. We didn't run away after that, and we were able to build credibility here quickly for that reason. We all worked through the long process of rebuilding (which is still happening), and we still see God working in the big and little details. We all learned together how to be a

church without a building in a community that values its history. We may have grieved the loss of a building, but now we can celebrate the ministry we are creating in the new building.

I love having deep roots not only in the church that I serve but also in my community. When our third child was born five years ago, she had some unexpected medical issues that required a week in the PICU and several appointments with her doctors in the first few months. Many people in our church and community supported us during that time with meals and care for our two older children. Being cared for has impacted how I now care for others in times of need. Out of that experience I started baking sourdough bread. I call it Fellowship Bread, although I doubt many understand the theological implications of it. The process of baking these loaves became a spiritual discipline— “God, who should this loaf go to?” I give away bread often to people in my community, to teachers, neighbors, strangers. I have given away hundreds of loaves over the years, and God has opened opportunities for relationships through these loaves. I have a community that supports me by providing most of my flour. I love living in a place where I can serve and be served and where I have learned how to love my neighbors in practical ways.



Above: The first baptism in our new building

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

Going to seminary was not in my plans, but God made it abundantly clear that's He wanted me to go to Gordon-Conwell. My childhood church loved me, but it did not prepare me for a Gordon-Conwell education. I needed a solid foundation before going out into the ministry, and that's exactly what Gordon-Conwell did for me. Being bi-vocational was always part of my calling, and out of my local church work more opportunities came. In the first few years of ministry, I was especially grateful that I had that solid foundation before entering into ministry, because once I started it would have been difficult to take the time.

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

I would have never thought about going to seminary, if it hadn't been for a friend who was the wife of a pastor. After Chris and I started sharing with others how God was calling him into the ministry, this friend told me that we'd always be doing ministry together and that it would be helpful for me to be prepared. It was only after hearing from her experiences that I prayed and heard God clearly encouraging me to join Chris. A theological education paired with mentored ministry and my Soul Care group was important for me to prepare for pastoring in a rural community. I thank God that I had that opportunity to study, to grow in my relationship with God, and to get some experiences doing ministry in a church before coming to serve in South Londonderry.

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

Loving people is more important than having all the answers. Jesus calls us to love God and love our neighbors. Transformation in people and in the church comes out of that love, and oftentimes that transformation takes a while.

Do you have any publications or links to share?

The church that I serve: www.firstbaptistslondonderryvt.org

The bread that I bake: www.instagram.com/fellowshipbread