

## Matt Warren (MACO & MDiv '14)



**Current title:** Co-founder and Executive Director at Harbor Christian Counseling in Boston, MA

**Family:** Married to Kristin for 10+ years, daughter Everly (6), son Cameron (2)

**Favorite professors:** Karen Mason, Jim Singleton

**Favorite classes:** Exegesis of Revelation, Integrative Seminars, & Group Process

**Favorite memory:** We loved living in community and having some of our closest friends as neighbors. I also loved working with the grounds crew and the rare occasions when I was allowed to drive the big deck mower across the Great Lawn.

### What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and where are you serving now? Do you have a particular specialization?

After graduation, I worked for several years as a clinician with a behavioral health agency on the North Shore. During that time, I became increasingly aware of the gaps that existed, particularly in the Greater Boston area, between Christian counseling providers and the local church. I spoke with pastor after pastor who felt underequipped, stretched too thin, and uncertain about where to send people in need of care when navigating complex mental health needs in their ministry context. I knew I wanted to be part of changing the landscape of Christian counseling in Boston so that these gaps would no longer exist and every church and every ministry leader in the area would be better connected to the mental health providers and resources that they need. Beginning in 2016, I joined with two other Gordon-Conwell alumni with a similar vision to form Harbor Christian Counseling in Boston. We have grown steadily ever since and now have fifteen clinicians on our team, including myself. Besides my own clinical caseload, I also serve as the Executive Director for Harbor and its affiliated non-profit that works in direct partnership with local churches to provide training and consultation services related to mental health.



**What do you love about your work?**

Working in a diverse context with a diverse range of clients has always been a favorite aspect of the job for me. I love that I have formed counseling relationships with everyone from artists to pastors to students to executives to scientists to medical professionals to homemakers to unemployed individuals to contractors to teachers and everything in between. I love that I get to spend time with people from all over the world and from all manner of cultural contexts and backgrounds. Because of this, I am always learning something new about people and about life through the eclectic experiences of my clients. As a team leader, I love working day by day to create the best possible work environment and professional community for our team to do the work that they have been called to do—and to do it with excellence and depth and a sense of fulfillment.

**What are the particular challenges of serving as a therapist in your context?**

As in most places, the demand for mental health services is massive here in Boston, and to provide appropriate outpatient-level care can often involve a mid- to long-term commitment to most of our clients. We maintain a waitlist for incoming requests and work hard to keep it moving, but it never seems to get any shorter! So just trying to keep up with constant demand while providing steady care for those already under care is a big challenge—for me personally and for our team as a whole. That also points to the challenge of guarding against burnout. Every therapist deals with this in one way or another, and it has definitely been a constant challenge that I need to stay vigilant about in my own practice.

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

Gordon-Conwell gave me a model for engaging in the work of counseling from an integrative perspective so that—whatever the context and whatever the role—as a counselor, I can bring both theological depth and clinical insight into my understanding of the work. That is true even when faith is not an explicit element of the counseling relationship, as it is always happening internally for the clinician who pursues the work with the mind of Christ. I absorbed this integrative perspective from the coursework itself, pro-sem groups, the faculty, classroom discussions, and especially from completing the MACO and MDiv degrees concurrently. I *had* to integrate everything together just to stay sane, and that mindset has managed to stick with me ever since. Bringing that into the present, the dynamic that we have tried to create at Harbor is one in which the team is constantly processing every part of our work from an integrative and collaborative perspective and sharpening one another in that along the way.

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

The most obvious intersection between Gordon-Conwell and my current practice is the incredible network of alumni that has shaped the team that I get to serve alongside.

# Alumni

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GORDON  CONWELL

Harbor was formed by three Gordon-Conwell alumni, and we have brought more than a dozen other alumni on board since then, and every year we welcome Gordon-Conwell interns from the MACO program to train with us. The alumni network has also been a significant help in making connections with local churches and ministry leaders to form partnerships with Harbor. Even our current office space was secured through a crazy sequence of events that points back to Gordon-Conwell alumni relationships. Basically, everything about my current context would look completely different if not for the common denominator of Gordon-Conwell, so that has been a tremendous blessing that just continues to bear fruit year over year.

## **What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are beginning therapists?**

Stay the course! It is not uncommon to feel overwhelmed or disillusioned after you jump into the deep waters of post-grad clinical work. My first few years in the field were draining and often frustrating and ultimately not at all what I had imagined my work life to look like during school. But I also gained invaluable experience and perspective, formed long-term professional connections, and developed a clear sense for what I did want to be doing eventually. Your vocational vision and professional identity are being meaningfully formed in those early years. Soak up all of the different work experiences and training opportunities that are available to you in whatever position you find yourself. Everything is useful when we have the mind of Christ in the midst of the work that we have been called to do.

## **Do you have any publications or links to share?**

You can learn more about Harbor Christian Counseling by [visiting our website](#) – we publish a free monthly newsletter with content related to the intersection of faith and mental health, which you can subscribe to on the website.