

Alumni Spotlight: John Bell (DMin '12)



Current Title: Pastor, Crossway Multinational Church

Family: Wife: Karen, Children: Forrest, Tom, and Laura

Favorite Professor: Haddon Robinson

Favorite Class: The first summer experience with Dr. Robinson was ministry-changing!

Favorite Memory: Before preaching in front of Dr. Robinson for the first time, and without notes, I was so nervous that I practiced over and over and over. I worried, "What would this great preacher have to say about my preaching?" Then I remembered that God would be listening too,

and that brought both comfort and greater fear! And this realization led me to confess that I was too focused on the wrong audience.

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

When I completed my DMin, I was still working as an associate professor of educational technology at Michigan State University. In 2014, we first started meeting as a church. In 2019, I retired from my work at MSU and have focused fully on ministry since then.

What do you love about your work?

I love being encouraged to learn even while I serve and lead by the grace of God. It is wonderful to be in a university community where there are people who have so much to share and teach me, and where challenging ideas can be examined within relational contexts. I love to engage with eager learners!

What are the particular joys and biggest challenges of planting a church in your context?

Serving in an intentionally diverse church is both the greatest joy and the biggest challenge. It is a joy because the environment enriches our learning and growth and enables us to see more of the glory of God than I would see if



I were only with people like me. It is a challenge because I never knew how many assumptions I have made about God, the Church, and people—and there are certainly more assumptions I have yet to see—that I need to reconsider. It can be hard to grow in the humility of being a learner who needs correction, even by the people I endeavor to serve and lead. I rejoice that God has put me in such a wonderful place of learning together with others!

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

I am so thankful for the connections I made in my cohort at Gordon-Conwell! It was great to have people from different denominational and national backgrounds in our courses. That experience, along with the rich opportunities I had to serve with and under people who are different from me, have been profound in shaping me for church planting work.

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

The excellent faculty had the biggest impact on me at Gordon-Conwell. Their challenging ideas and interactions helped to shape and prepare me for my own preaching ministry and opportunities to teach others about preaching.

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

One of the most influential parts of my journey was participating in a small group of pastors of which I was in the minority, both racially and theologically. Those interactions challenged me to look beyond my own experiences and assumptions, which prepared me for leading in a diverse church.

I would highly recommend that all church planters, as well as people serving in established churches, find or form a community of people on a similar journey who are also different in important ways, and then wrestle with the Word, life, and ministry together.

Do you have any publications, links, or resources to share?

Learn more about [Crossway Multinational Church](#), located in East Lansing, Michigan.