

## Alumni Spotlight: Peter Bowell (MDiv '97)



**Current Title:** Senior Associate Pastor

**Family:** Wife - Meg, three children and two grandchildren (My oldest son also serves in ministry as a church planter.)

**Favorite Professor:** Walt Kaiser—Walt and his wife lived below us in Bell Hall while they were transitioning to the Presidency. They became good friends, and I loved his Old Testament classes. Walt even flew to Richmond to speak at my ordination service. Garth Rosell—Garth took over the “Coffee with Kerr” class, touring students around Boston while teaching church history.

**Favorite Classes:** The Pentateuch with Dr. Hugenberger & Church History with Dr. Rosell

**Favorite Memory:** The relationships I built at Bell Hall and the special time with family and faculty, especially while I served as the student chaplain for chapel.

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

After receiving my degree, I moved to Richmond, Virginia to begin a church plant with David Dwight (DMin '95) called Hope Church. We celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hope on October 23, 2022. Sometimes in the midst of the work we lose sight of the Lord's faithfulness and provision—we grow through the struggles but often forget to offer a sacrifice of praise in the midst of them. I am so thankful for the Lord's work.

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

The people. In fact, I often have to guard my heart, knowing that Jesus did not ask Peter if he loved the sheep but if he loved Jesus. I love to raise my hands during a benediction and no matter how the sermon landed, I get to remind people how loved they are by God and that they “Go nowhere by accident.”

I do love to teach, but every week that I do preach I don't enjoy the anticipation of the intense labor it will take to prepare the sermon. It is good work, and I am always encouraged by the insights the Lord gives me, but it is a lot of work amid daily pastoral work.

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

Richmond at one time had a reputation as the church planting graveyard. There is enough religious inoculation to drain a church of its passion, but we found that a church

can become an irresistible movement if it is biblical, authentic, and sees each person that walks through the door as a whole life.

One of the challenges over the last few years has been staff transitions and realizing what got us here would not sustain us for the future. In other words, moving from a lack of structure to more structure and accountability. We have gone from a small church to a much larger church with a vision for planting and having multiple sites.

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

I still maintain some relationships from my time at Gordon-Conwell that I check in with occasionally. For instance, when I have needed help with some church polity or even Hebrew interpretation, I still call former classmates and friends that are brighter lightbulbs in the area of exegesis or building church community.

I have also been able to recommend Gordon-Conwell to younger students who are exploring a call into ministry.

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

Gordon-Conwell gave me the tools I needed to preach and teach. I have confidence in preparing a sermon. I often harken back to my days with Haddon Robinson reminding me of the one thing needed, instead of 5 points for any sermon. From making transitions to doing the work to find the “big idea,” my education at Gordon-Conwell has served me well. My time at Gordon-Conwell also grew my love for reading and anchored me in theological truth.



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

Find someone to do this work with. David Dwight and I don't know how anyone can do the work of church planting alone. Even if more money has to be raised, or a better vision needs to be cast, start with two.

Guard your heart. Be okay with leading with a limp. Be kind to yourself and have at least one friend you can trust to share honestly about the areas in which you need help. Don't ever apologize for needing time away. More is caught than taught. The answer really is Jesus.