

## Alumni Spotlight: Shin Soh (MDiv '99)



**Current Title & Military Branch:** Delta Chaplain, Space Base Delta 2, Buckley Space Force Base, United States Air Force (I am an Air Force chaplain currently supporting the US Space Force)

**Family:** My wife, Anna, and I have been married for 23 years and have four daughters, Robyn, Lauren, Olivia and Kate. The oldest recently graduated from the University of Washington and just joined the Air Force as a Second Lieutenant through the ROTC program.

**Favorite professors:** Dr. Garth Rosell

**Favorite class:** I've loved any Church History classes, and I still have on my bookshelf "The Millionaire and the Scrublady" that Dr. Rosell used to open his classes with.

**Favorite memory:** I have fond memories of playing basketball in the old C-Level gym at night. Combined with my college years, I spent eight years in New England, and it still brings back warm memories of its beauty.

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

I was ordained shortly after graduation and served as a full-time youth pastor in New Jersey, and then as a college and young adult pastor in Tacoma, Washington. From there, I was commissioned as a chaplain in the Air Force in 2005 and have served in North Dakota, California, Japan, and Korea, along with three deployments. Currently, I am serving as the Delta Chaplain at Buckley Space Force Base in Aurora, Colorado.

### **What do you love about your work as a military chaplain?**

At its core, I love how we, as chaplains, get to live and work among the people that we minister to and be present where and when they are in desperate need. We get to walk with people of all faiths and backgrounds as their colleagues and friends and provide incarnational ministry in their midst, through their joys and tears.

Also, it has been a privilege to travel far and wide, sometimes to "authorized personnel only" places. Along the way, my family got to join me in many of these places, and the experience has truly enriched our lives.

### **What are the particular challenges of serving as a military chaplain in general and/or in your specific context?**

One of the previous Air Force Chaplain Corps mottos is "Visible Reminders of the Holy" which expresses the incarnational nature of the chaplaincy. But navigating how to be

true to your convictions amidst the diverse, yet uniform military setting is a delicate expertise that requires long patience and practice. Chaplains get to be in a position to offer critical assistance to people who are in their most vulnerable places, and it is essential to learn how to come “alongside” them, without violating the religious rights of either party, yet truly represent your faith.

I have often seen chaplains depicted in the movies heroically caring for dying soldiers in the field of fire—many chaplains’ experiences are not as dramatic but no less important to those who are in crisis. My first counseling as a chaplain was a young Staff Sergeant whose husband walked out on her that morning—quite different from what I had been exposed to. Since then, I walked alongside people with career issues, assaults, abuses, and even deaths. It is still daunting to know that Christ uses me as a vessel to be a visible reminder of the Holy to them.



**How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now? How did you come to be doing your current work?**

I immigrated to the US as a teenager, and joining the military was far from my imagination or desire. But after my graduation and ordination, I was serving in New Jersey when 9/11 took place. That experience led me to consider serving the country that provided so many good opportunities in my life, but I just felt too timid to jump in at the time. It was after I moved to Tacoma, where I encountered many veterans at the church, and an Army captain who shared that a military chaplain led him to Christ. To me, that affirmed my sense of calling to the chaplaincy. Then, I just followed the advice of an Army veteran who told me his only recommendation was to “Go Air Force”—and that is how ended up as an Air Force chaplain.

**What has been Gordon-Conwell’s biggest impact/influence on the work you do now or the way you do your work?**

I feel like I was in a hurry to get to the “real life” ministry while I was at GCTS, but in retrospect, I truly appreciate the diversity and evangelicalism that I learned in my seminary years. Military chaplaincy has required me to care for people of all faiths and backgrounds, through working with chaplains of various faith backgrounds, and having the Gordon-Conwell experience has made it easier to navigate the “real life” ministry.



**What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are considering serving as a military chaplain?**

Just as with any other pursuit in life, start with the sense of God's calling. The pay and benefits are great, but without the sense of calling to this ministry, it won't benefit you or your people.

Also, I often advise new chaplains to think of themselves as a federal employee who gets to take care of everyone as a Christian, not as a Christian pastor merely transplanted into the military to only take care of their own flock.

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

Learn more about [becoming an Air Force Chaplain](#). I would be happy to answer any questions through my [email](#).