

## Alumni Spotlight: Chad Williams (MACH '07)



**Current title:** Senior Pastor at Union Church of Manila

**Family:** Wife: Janelle, Children: Ellie and Malachi

**Favorite professor:** Timothy Tennent

**Favorite class:** History of Mission

**Favorite memory:** I enjoyed meeting with Dr. Tennent in his office upon a couple of occasions as we discussed missions and ministry together.

**Would you tell us about the church you are currently serving?**

Union Church of Manila (UCM) is a vibrant, multicultural, international church strategically located in the economic hub of Metro Manila. For 110 years, UCM has welcomed people from many nations and denominational backgrounds, drawing them together under the common purpose of exalting Jesus Christ. Founded in 1914 during a time of a growing American presence in Manila, UCM has steadfastly remained both a sanctuary and thriving community of worship for English-speaking Christians. Today, UCM continues its rich legacy as it partners with believers from around forty different nations and forty denominations who share a common desire to realize the life-changing transformation that Jesus brings to individuals, societies, and nations.

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

Pastoring at UCM requires a deep appreciation for and understanding of many different historic streams of Christianity; this is because UCM membership includes Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Lutherans, etc. Furthermore, one must be aware of many cultural dynamics that exist in a congregation of many nations. My training at Gordon-Conwell primarily in historical theology and intercultural studies so deeply and richly prepared me for this role, something I certainly did not foresee at the time I was studying in South Hamilton.

**What do you love about the ministry work you are doing now?**

There is too much to list here! Let me offer a few insights from an article I wrote for a book that is being published right now for the 110<sup>th</sup> Union Church of Manila Anniversary:

*“There’s no place on Earth like UCM!” These were some of the words that greeted me upon my first visit to Union Church of Manila in the winter of 2018. At the time, I thought these words might have been offered as an enticement to persuade me to be the church’s next senior pastor. However, now having served at UCM for over five years, I have heard this phrase repeated dozens of times and have even repeated it myself*

# Alumni

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*more times than I can remember to those who wish to know more about the church I am privileged to lead.*

*On a weekly basis UCM continues to be an earthly portrait of the heavenly reality found in Revelation 7:9 as various tribes, tongues and nations gather to worship Christ. This eclectic mix of people from so many walks of life means that one will regularly encounter people from different worldviews, backgrounds, understandings of Scripture, and practices of the Christian faith who simultaneously remain totally united in the quest to exalt Christ. This is one of the reasons every Sunday I am compelled to stand at the Rada entrance of UCM to*

*personally welcome and meet hundreds of people. It is always exciting to meet someone with a new accent, from a new country, with a new story, and unique journey of faith. I am able to greet missionaries, entrepreneurs, embassy workers, professors, teachers, NGO workers, business leaders, and people from many others professions and walks of life. I am not only privileged to greet them each week, but I also have the wonderful opportunity to open the Scriptures to them, to share meals with them, and journey with them on a short leg of their lives.*

*I want it to be widely known that I have been loved well as a pastor. Kind notes, generous gifts, and offerings of prayer and encouragement are a weekly part of my tenure at UCM. This ongoing affection makes it a delight to pastor such a warm and loving body of believers. Indeed, there is no place like UCM!*

## **What are the particular challenges of serving in a large church in general, and in your specific context?**

My greatest challenge is that I do not personally know many of the people in my congregation. With smaller congregations that I previously served, and while I was on the mission field, I was able to pastor everyone in my community of faith. I knew each person's name. I knew their life story. I was able to be personally involved in their decision-making processes, their struggles, their joys and their spiritual discipleship. Of course, in a larger church this is simply not possible. So, I often feel disconnected to those I minister to from the pulpit. I think the shepherd's heart wants to know the name of every sheep, but in a larger/transient congregation this is seemingly impossible.

Not unrelated to the above sentiment, I often feel tremendous pressure of leading an iconic and multifaceted organization in the Philippines. I sometimes begin to feel like a "CEO" who must 1) make good executive decisions in a church that is full of many other excellent executive leaders of global organizations and 2) I feel the weight of having to write an ongoing stream of "good sermons" knowing thousands from the congregation, from our international and local online viewership, and from our radio program will be listening. Being self-aware that I am not the most refined or articulate communicator, preparing for this broad and generally highly educated audience can generate tremendous pressure to always write an excellent sermon.

**What has been Gordon-Conwell's biggest impact/influence on your ministry or the way you engage in ministry?**

Dr. Tim Tennent deeply impacted me after catching his vision to train international leaders. He encouraged me to finish my PhD and then use that training to equip others in the global church. While teaching biblical and missiological studies at a Christian university in California, I started going on short term trips with Training Leaders International. After this, I started organizing trips through my various contacts in Asia, Africa, and now the Philippines, where I currently work with tribal mountain pastors who have no access to theological training.



I find this work so much more satisfying than work within the formal academic context from which I came. My workplace hosts weeklong trainings for 30-40 pastors here in the Philippines. We are planning to expand to different parts of the country to better equip our national pastors. So, while I embrace my role as a "Senior Pastor," Dr. Tennent personally instilled the conviction that we have a responsibility to take our learning to global pastors who lack theological resources. Thus, for years I have taken 3-4 weeks a year to devote myself to other pastors who I believe are heroic as they have obeyed an incredibly challenging calling in adverse circumstances. These men and women especially need help and encouragement from those who have abundant resources. I am certain Dr. Tennent's vision for global theological training has directly and deeply influenced me.

**What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are beginning in ministry?**

In about the tenth year of ministry when I was facing burnout, my friend and my counselor, who had over 20 years of experience counseling pastors, told me that we who are pastors are what he called "dragon slayers". We constantly find ourselves in the middle of the action. This is because we have a heart to help people and solve problems in the body of Christ. But my friend told me that the problem with dragon slayers is that they often die young, meaning that the life of a dragon slayer is a hard life to maintain for the long haul. He suggested more seasons of rest, reflection, more conversations with other pastors, and allowing others to take the lead on projects. I wish I would have had someone early on in my ministry give me a stronger warning about the pressures that can derail us in this lofty calling.

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

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