

## Alumni Spotlight: Chris Payne (MDiv '04)



**Current title:** Senior Pastor at New City Church

**Family:** Wife: Jen, Children: Jackson, Maryn, and Faith

**Favorite professors:** Rodney Cooper (Helping Relationships) and Tim Laniak (Old Testament)

**Favorite class:** Church History with Garth Rosell

**Favorite memory:** Classes on Friday nights and Saturdays with a cohort of amazing men and women pursuing God's calling on their lives. This was such a pressing and amazing season of life together.

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

I am in my fifteenth year as the senior pastor of New City Church. We planted what is now our Matthews campus in 2010 and merged that campus with Church at Charlotte in 2018 to form New City. I previously served as an associate pastor at Forest Hill Church for eleven years.

Our church has a unique story of two "healthy" churches coming together to form a new church. Church at Charlotte was facing a senior pastor succession and New Charlotte (where I was) was facing facility and resources limitations. We decided to come together (an eighteen-month process) and form a new church, with me serving as the senior pastor. This was an arduous process, but equally fulfilling and necessary for both churches. We are now in our sixth year together, and are about to cast our first long range vision: "Helping People Find and Follow Jesus Here, Near, and Far."

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

I started at Gordon-Conwell in the fall of 1999, concurrent with beginning my first ministry role (as a student pastor) at Forest Hill. I met several key people in my time at Gordon-Conwell who helped to shape me and prepare me for ministry. I work with several of those folks now in various capacities and stay in touch with several of my professors as well!

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

I love meeting people in their story and helping their lives to intersect with the gospel story of Jesus. I especially love teaching and preaching, which I felt very encouraged and equipped in during my time at Gordon-Conwell.

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

Being able to connect with people that you pastor on a relational level. I recognize that I cannot know everyone in our current context in the ways that I would long to. We have an incredible team of shepherds, and I try to do my part with those whom I can connect with.

**How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in ministry?**

The relationships I formed at Gordon-Conwell still serve me today. I loved my time of study at seminary and the men and women who poured into me.



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

Be a learner, always. I know you've heard that, but you've spent so much time and effort to learn the things you needed to at Gordon-Conwell so now take that same effort into your ministry roles. I made the mistake of thinking, ok, I finished school and I'm ready to not study! In some ways that's fair for a season, but not a good go forward posture. I graduated from Gordon-Conwell twenty years ago and what I am realizing more and more is how much Gordon-Conwell taught me about **how to learn** and show up with fellow learners. Maybe even more than the content I gained from Gordon-Conwell, I gained an appreciation for being a student in all the ways. Jesus says that a person who listens and follows his teaching is like, "a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock" (Luke 6:48a). Keep digging deeply into God's story and your own story, there is always more.

**Do you have any publications or links you'd like to share?**

You can find me on our [church website](#) if I can ever be of help to you.