

Alumni Spotlight: Marnie Crumpler (DMin '08)



Current title: Senior Pastor at GRACE Church Bethlehem

Family: Husband: Rev. Dr. Mark Crumpler, serves with me on the pastoral staff at GRACE, Children: John Crumpler and Anna Crumpler Reed

Favorite class: I was challenged and blessed by every cohort session.

Favorite memory: Defending and finishing my final project/dissertation. That was challenging.

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

One of the greatest joys of my life is pastoring this dear church. When I arrived, the congregation was at the end of a difficult season of denominational discernment. After losing the building in a long, drawn-out legal proceeding, we had a five-year “tabernacle season” worshipping in a Catholic high school auditorium and hosting choir meetings, staff meetings, and next generation ministries at my home. After a few months, we purchased a small church building for our weekday ministries as well as weddings and funerals.

We moved into our new church campus in April 2023. We have seen God’s sovereign hand lead over and over again. People’s lives are being changed as they take steps toward Jesus. We are already experiencing growing pains as more and more people join us. It is thrilling to be an all-generations church with 150-year-old roots, *and* with risk and trust in Jesus, infused into our DNA. Please pray that the Lord continues to move in Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley, and that men, women, boys, and girls will bend their knee to Jesus.

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

God is sovereign. The older I get, the more my eyes are opened to see His sovereign hand. Many of my dearest friends in ministry are connected to Gordon-Conwell as alumni or as professors. Those connections were a large part of my introduction to this congregation.

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

So much. I love the people. I love that we have been through a difficult journey together and have seen the faithfulness of the Lord. I love that God is bringing more diversity to our congregation. I love that our leaders are rowing together and understand the mission of the church. I love our staff, the most gifted team I’ve ever led. I love the preaching ministry and the ways that my eight-year tenure enables me to preach in new

and creative ways. Finally, I love having a really good seat to see God's amazing work in an incredibly unique and sweet season.

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

Large churches are like every other church. There are people who don't yet know the Lord. People need to be disciplined and deployed for mission and ministry. Some need extra grace. All need life-giving relationships. The community has needs that the church can meet—great commandment needs and great commission needs.

Large churches have the challenge of scaling to meet those needs. Teams need to be built and nurtured to serve together. At GRACE, we continue to build the systems and infrastructure necessary to hold ourselves accountable to the mission to which the Church is called. This is demanding work and not always fun. As we grow, it is critical to add the right staff positions and call the right people that will build ministry synergy, and it is critical to engage the entire congregation. We've had a great church-wide learning experience which has taught us that Christians don't just go to church – they are the church.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in ministry

Gordon-Conwell has served me and my ministry in many ways. First, the Leadership degree invited me to "look beneath the hood" of my life and ministry. When I entered the program, I was a mom with young children, a wife, and a pastor in a demanding role. My studies at Gordon-Conwell were critical to reset the ways I served, and to position me for a long and "whole" life of ministry.

Additionally, I entered that program to reinforce my personal value of being a life-long learner. Since I graduated, I now have a disciplined reading and study regimen. You must have input to be an effective preacher and leader.

Finally, I have life-long friends in ministry from my program cohort. I met people in my denominational tribe and outside my tribe. This was energizing and life-giving, and those friendships continue to be a part of my life.

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

Stay close to Jesus. Tend to your soul. Trust that God is leading you to right where you are. Love people even when it's difficult.