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Rev. Brack Ballard '16 Serves as Part-time Youth Pastor in Charlotte, N.C.

As he entered the School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, the Rev. Brack Ballard told his professors, fellow students and anyone who would listen that he did not want to become a pastor. "I said, 'God can call me wherever he would like to call me, but I am not working in a church,'" he reflected. "I feel like those feelings are shared amongst a lot of millennials. Working in the church is tough, it's hard. A lot of my colleagues are working in non-profits or working in a ministry outside of the church setting and that's kind of what I wanted to do."

However, just over a year later, God changed his heart, and the Huntersville, N.C., resident applied for the youth pastor's position at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. Ballard received his Master of Divinity in

pastoral care and counseling from GWU in 2016 and served the church for full time for five years. "I felt like God wanted me to start applying the wisdom and knowledge I was gaining from Gardner-Webb to others," he shared. "I wanted to continue that channel of blessing and wanted to be able to pass it along."

After working full-time for five years at Pritchard and serving for a short time as a youth director for a Methodist church, Ballard began to feel God calling him to teach school. Currently, he's teaching social studies at a middle school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system, and he's serving as part-time youth pastor at Pritchard.

Ballard chose the divinity school at Gardner-Webb for several reasons. The top ones being the kindness of the professors and diversity of the students. Ballard also appreciated learning Greek and Hebrew, which are required courses for GWU divinity students. Additionally, many of the professors could share from their own experiences, having



pastored churches or currently serving as pastors or interim pastors.

“It was the most rewarding experience,” Ballard affirmed. “You learn more about God, more about the Bible, more about yourself and others. I’m a better husband for going to divinity school, a better father, and a better friend. I’m very big on grace now. Gardner-Webb really instilled that in me—not only to give grace to others but grace to myself. One thing the church fails to do is teach the importance of offering grace to ourselves.”

He especially appreciated the case studies presented in several courses. “Because of those case studies, the experiences I have had in the church have not surprised me,” he observed. “I think the more you can unveil before you walk into a church, it just helps you.”



The Rev. Brack Ballard, third from left, is part-time youth pastor at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C.

His message to young people reflects the GWU motto: *Pro Deo et Humanitate* – For God and Humanity. “The youth know this as one of my phrases—‘Spread Love, Make a difference,’” Ballard asserted. “I coined this phrase from Matthew 22:37-38, which states, Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.’ That’s what we strive to teach, lead by example, and empower the next generation of leaders. I want to help them build an authentic relationship with God that will last through eternity, share the Good News with others only using words if they have to, and learn to treat their neighbor as themselves.”

[Learn more about the Gardner-Webb School of Divinity.](#)