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### GWU Alumnus Discovered God Had Different Plan for His Life

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# GWU Alumnus Discovered God Had Different Plan for His Life

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Office of University  
Communications

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## *Wesley Smith Enters Ministry, Pursues Master of Divinity*

Rev. Wesley Smith thought he was following God's will for his life in 2001 when he received his bachelor's in criminal justice from Gardner-

Photo of Rev. Wesley Smith

Webb University. However, he became discouraged when he didn't find a job in juvenile probation and parole and wasn't sure what to do. Direction came during a church revival service. "For the first time in my life, I heard God to speak to me," Smith recalled. "I heard God tell me that he wanted me to serve his church."

God was calling him to a life of ministry. He sought advice from his pastor, who was also his grandfather. "He told me if I could do anything else in life and be happy, that I should do it," Smith related. "I wrestled with this over the next six months, and could not get away from it. So I went back to my grandpa and told him that I could not be happy doing anything else. He encouraged me to get some biblical training, so I called the divinity school that week."

Smith liked the GWU School of Divinity's sense of community and the opportunity to interact with other students. He appreciated all of his professors, but Dr. Doug Dickens and the late Dr. Dan Goodman became his mentors and friends. Goodman gave him extra assistance with the Greek language, which enhanced his interpretation of the scriptures. Dickens taught several of the pastoral care and counseling classes and challenged students to self-examination.

Rev. Wesley Smith serves his congregation

"Self-discovery and developing our identity in Christ is extremely important," Smith assessed. "My pastoral care and counseling classes helped me to better understand myself and how to help others. Other classes helped me to handle the biblical text with more confidence."

Smith also believes his criminal justice studies help as he seeks to serve people. "I have benefited greatly in my ministry by having an undergraduate degree in an area outside of religious studies," he asserted. "The psychology and sociology classes have helped me tremendously in ministering to people."

Smith received his Master of Divinity in Pastoral Care and Counseling in 2008. While he was in school, he served two churches. He began his ministry in 2003 at Sandy Run Baptist Church in Mooresboro, N.C., and served at Boiling Springs (N.C.) Baptist Church from 2007 to 2016. He found his classes to be manageable and appreciated the support and understanding he received from church members and his professors.

In April 2016, Smith accepted the position of associational missionary for the Greater Cleveland County Baptist Association. Based in Shelby, N.C., the association is made up of 88 churches. "I love Cleveland County and feel honored that God has called me to serve the Baptist churches here," Smith affirmed. "I serve pastors, staff and church leaders. Our office is a resource for the churches and the community. We exist to unite congregations in effective missions and ministries. Along with providing resources, training and support for the churches, we also create mission partnerships for short-term mission projects, and have a community assistance office."

*If you are interested in learning more about the School of Divinity, [click here](#), or you can [apply now](#).*