

I have attempted below to describe my last 20 years, integrating my voluntary ministry, secular work, and advanced studies -- and I hope everything here has relevance. I have also included my rationale for key life and ministry decisions I have made thus far, to give you my developing sense of calling along the way. I hope this is helpful!

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Early ministry (1993-1998)

- *Undergraduate studies at Ohio University (1992-1996).* During my sophomore year I began to lead Bible studies, and also "First Year Fellowship" for college students looking to become Young Life leaders. I was very active in multiple parachurch ministries, as well as our local church, and I participated in a missions trip to England in 1994.
- *After college (1996-1998).* Upon graduation, Lise and I moved to Manassas, Virginia, where I worked as an electrical and software engineer. I spent a full school year as a Young Life volunteer leader, which included spending time at local high schools trying to meet kids (intimidating work!), performing in skits, giving messages, and taking kids to camp. Lise and I would have continued in this work, but we moved back to Ohio in 1998. Also, I began teaching Adult Sunday School classes at an Evangelical Free church.

Teaching, managing in the software industry (1998-2008)

- *Teacher.* My undergrad was in Electrical Engineering, but within a couple of years I had the opportunity to teach computer programming in the corporate world. One of the reasons I chose this position, as I explained at the time, **was to develop the communication skills necessary for gospel ministry.**
- *Manager.* Within two years of hire, I was raised to a position of management over the growing number of instructors (10+), even though I believe I was the youngest instructor (26 yrs old). This included interviewing candidates, designing a compensation package, and ensuring proper training of the trainers. But this management role didn't last long, for the recession hit and many of our new instructors were laid off. I continued to teach half a year, and starting in 2002 I would use the other half of each year to attend seminary.

Ministry just before seminary (2000-2002)

- *Church plant leadership.* Lise and I were (loosely) part of the leadership team for a Evangelical Free church plant in Akron, Ohio, led by the pastor from the church we attended in college. The church plant struggled, some of it due to my own shortcomings no doubt, which alerted me to the fact that our common zeal and sincerity did not guarantee everything we expected. Within a couple of years we left the church, as did some other leaders, with some hard lessons learned.
- *Teaching ministry.* Our understanding of the faith was changing, and after spending a helpful year at a Lutheran church we used their pastor's exit as an opportunity to settle back at my home (Mennonite) church in Ohio. Although now Reformed more than Mennonite, I happily enjoyed our common ground in the faith by teaching Sunday School and **giving a number of talks on Sunday nights on various topics, including Islam, Bioethics, Pluralism, Faith & Good Works**, etc. I also gave a series of talks regularly in the home of the parents of one of my friends.
 - I first heard about New Life from a friend at our Mennonite church during this time! He told me before we moved, "If you ever see a church named New Life in the Philly area, go to it!"
- *Small group and discipleship.* I started a small group with three other young men, all a few years younger than me, and all raised in the Mennonite church. Little did I know that one of them would become my brother-in-law, and another is now the pastor of my home church!

Our first years in Glenside (2002-2009)

- *Which Master's degree?* In 2002 I began my Master's at Westminster. I chose the MDiv program (3 yrs) over the MAR (Master of Arts in Religion, 2 years) because I thought I might be called to be a pastor. A lot of students headed towards an eventual PhD, the so-called academic track, choose the MAR program instead. But even if I went the PhD route in the end, **I felt that the extra year of practical theology would help me stay rooted in the gospel and the church**, and better connect any future academic work to things that matter most. In the end the degree took 5 years, due to my software teaching work.
- *Joining New Life (2002)*. We were thrilled by so many great churches in the area, but we quickly settled on New Life. We became members within five months of moving to Glenside. I immediately loved the worship, and my then-pregnant wife will admit she loved hearing about the meals ministry!
- *Pastoral internships (2003-2006)*. **I served pastoral internships in three very different churches during my first seminary degree**, two in Ohio (a Mennonite church and a PCUSA church) and one at New Life itself. The first two were especially helpful in giving me a good overview of the various activities and responsibilities of a pastor. The internships went well and I enjoyed especially the time spent getting to know the congregations.
- *Leading a minichurch (2004-2009)*. What a great time this was, and it came with a number of the challenges, including a difficult shepherding case. In addition to leading teaching and sharing times, I organized activities, such as murder mystery dinners and movie & discussion nights (partially designed as an outreach).
- *Teaching children (2005-2006?)*. I was invited to help catechize our 2nd and 3rd graders during the Sunday School hour, which I enjoyed very much.
- *My first full AdultEd course at New Life (2006)*. Pastor Terry called me one day and told me that AdultEd was becoming difficult to manage, having a series of classes taught by a different instructor each week. He asked me if I would teach an entire Fall series myself, and I enthusiastically agreed. This became my "A Fresh Look at Jesus" class (12 weeks), complete with old school PowerPoint presentations.
- *My first pulpit committee: the EMM pastor search (2007)*. I was asked to be part of the committee to find an Evangelism-Mercy-Missions assistant pastor for our church. I had just graduated with my MDiv, and **several times I was encouraged by Terry and other members on the committee to apply for the job myself**. I thought about it seriously, since serving at New Life sounded so appealing, but I didn't think I was the mature evangelist we were looking for, in spite of my helpful Young Life experience. In the end it proved very difficult to find just a person in the PCA, but we did find an excellent candidate (Dan Rogers), yet he turned us down and eventually the elders left the position unfulfilled for financial reasons.
- *PhD?* With about 1-2 years left in my master's program, I realized I could best serve the Lord if I spent more time studying. I thought about an Apologetics PhD at Westminster, but thought I should first talk to Westminster's Dr. Bill Edgar. **He said that the Apologetics PhD is obviously a very academic degree, like all PhDs, but it's actually intended for pastors**. This practical orientation plus academic rigor sounded attractive, and I have noticed that many of the most capable ministers have put in extra years studying, with New Life's Jack Miller and Tim Keller immediately leaping to mind. Yet Dr. Edgar's words carried an implicit warning: don't expect an academic job with this type of degree. There are very few jobs open in academia for someone with an Apologetics PhD. A more marketable degree would be Philosophical Theology, at a place like Yale, which I investigated online for a generous ten minutes. I knew Lise was the happiest of our marriage in Glenside and at New Life, thus I demanded of myself a very good reason to move the family. I couldn't come up with one, especially knowing that Westminster's program would allow me to choose practical and generalized coursework. We decided to stay in Glenside, and my PhD commenced in Fall 2007.
- *More AdultEd (2007-2009)*. **I have always believed AdultEd has enormous potential**. At New Life I have taught many series since the first one in 2006, and some of this material will

find its way into print some day, Lord willing. Following up my "Fresh Look at Jesus" series, I taught semester long courses entitled "Crazy Corinth" (2007) and my personal favorite, "The Gospel According to the [neglected] Old Testament" (2008), which I also taught in abbreviated form **at New Life Philly**.

- *Trip to India (2008)*. The EMM pulpit committee put missions again on my mind, and so **I went to India with our New Life team**, where I taught indigenous pastors through an interpreter (mainly a walk the Bible / Biblical theology) and gave a sermon on Acts. It was great to see wonderful hospitals and schools at work serving the needy.
- *Uh-oh (2009)*. The Great Recession began, hitting IT budgets hard. We decided to move back to Ohio where we could live cheaply with Lise's parents while I did independent study work for my PhD program, and taught the occasional software class now as an independent contractor. The plan was to live there for 15 months, until the economic weather cleared, and then move back to Glenside. Whaddayaknow, this is exactly what occurred! Praise the Lord.

Back in Ohio (2009-2010)

- *Preaching*. We settled back into my home church, at a time in which our pastor began suffering from debilitating back pain. **They asked me to fill the pulpit frequently, and so I preached about 20 times during Sunday morning services.**
- *My business grows*. In 2010 I extended my independent contract work by adding several more customers. This put us in a financial position to return to Glenside.

Back in Glenside (2010-present)

- *New Life's college students (2011-2012)*. Wanting to help our college students survive the academic experience, especially in academic arenas in which their faith may be challenged, **I spent two summers teaching an apologetically oriented Sunday School class.** (I have hoped to turn this endeavor into a Fri night - Saturday "College Preparation weekend" for graduating seniors and returning college students of nearby churches, and run it every summer. But I have not done so yet.)
- *More AdultEd (2010-present)*. "Answering Objections" (2011), "The Jesus Class" (2011), "Help – It's Hard to Follow Jesus in the 21st Century!" (2012), "Theology for Dummies (and other Presbyterians)" (2013), and "Deuteronomy" (2014). **I was also asked to teach my "Answering Objections" series at New Life Philly (2013) and again at Calvary Willow Grove (2014).**
- *Pulpit Committee chairperson (2012-2014)*. This has been an immensely challenging and wonderful experience, **demanding many of the same varied skills needed in pastoral ministry.** Arguably this is the church position that most resembles the senior pastor position, at least from a leadership and administrative perspective, although I realize the exact duties of the position remain unknown and mysterious to many!
- *Seminary Teaching (2013)*. **I taught Apologetics 101 at Redeemer Seminary** in Dallas in the Fall of 2013. This involved me flying to Dallas for four weekends to deliver my lectures. I also served as a professor for an independent study in Spring in 2014.
- *Series Editor for P&R Publishing (2013-present)*. **I am the series co-editor** for an upcoming book series entitled *Great Thinkers*. Several of us designed the series together, and subsequently the work of the selection of authors and overall management of the series has been given to myself and Dr. Nate Shannon. Upcoming volumes will focus on Thomas Aquinas, Karl Marx, Karl Barth, and others. This is a paid part-time position.
- *All But Dissertation (ABD)*. Recently I sustained my written and oral comprehensive examinations, which means my last requirement to complete my doctorate is the dissertation. Of course I hope to complete my dissertation, but more important to me is to attend to the needs of any ministry position I may accept.
- *Informal ministry*. As I get older I find myself in more informal 'counseling-ish' conversations, as well as Lise and I continuing to use our home as a place for hospitality ministry.