

ALUMS PLANT CHURCH IN PITTSBURGH

When considering his call to church planting, Chris Brown '08 quipped with professors, "If this doesn't work, you'd better change what you're teaching, because this is everything that you taught us!"

Though he had no intentions of starting a new congregation when he first came to seminary, the Rev. Chris Brown '08 now serves as co-pastor of The Upper Room, a church plant in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood. Additionally, he leads the Seminary's newly established Church Planting Initiative.

Through weekly prayer, discussions with PTS faculty, and a conversation with Pittsburgh Presbytery's director of New Church Development, Chris and his co-pastor, Michael Gehrling '08, were called to new church development. Chris explains, "I accepted the call because I knew this was a way to live out the 'missional' calling of the church. With people in our culture increasingly claiming no religious affiliation, church planting is thought to be one of the best ways to reach out to the unchurched and call them into new relationships with Christ."

New congregations are important for the future of the church because they provide laboratories in which we can experiment with new ideas. Can a new congregation be started on a small budget with two part-time co-pastors? Let's try it. Can we worship in nontraditional spaces, such as living rooms and storefronts? Let's try it. Can we experiment with different styles of music and liturgy? Let's try it.

"In this sense, new church development is like the 'research and development' arm of the church," says Chris. "We try new things and discover what works for effectively and authentically bringing new disciples to Christ, thus providing lessons from which the broader church can learn."

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