

## LEAVING MINISTRY TO GO TO SEMINARY

In 2008, the Rev. Chris Thomas '11 left ministry to go to seminary. The youth pastor at a prominent Presbyterian church in his home state of California, he began following God's call to ordained ministry by enrolling at Pittsburgh Seminary. "When a friend and I came for a campus visit, the warm welcome of the community at PTS contrasted with experiences I'd had on tours at other seminaries, and I knew right away that I wanted to pursue my pastoral preparation at Pittsburgh Seminary," Chris recalls.

So Chris, his wife, and their two children moved to Pittsburgh. By the time they left after Chris's graduation in 2011, they'd become a family of five. They headed to Michigan, where ever since Chris has served as associate pastor for family development at First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth—and where their own family has developed into a group of six, with the addition of a fourth child/third daughter.



Chris's role at First Plymouth has been a great fit for his strengths and therefore also for the church. An active, seven-days-a-week church with a membership of more than 1,000, First Plymouth has a dynamic mission program, which includes a strategic international partnership with a congregation in Malawi and a local partnership with an inner-city ministry that works with kids in one of the most dangerous zip codes in Detroit. Among other things, Chris has helped to lead a team approach of their various ministries to families and developed a new mission statement with the Family Ministry Team he put together. Along with his work in the congregation, he has been very involved in the ministry of the Detroit Presbytery and has served as chair of its New Church Development committee.

Though Chris has now worked in ministry for 15 years, he says the transition to becoming an ordained pastor brought "interesting dynamics I'd never experienced before." He reflects, "The relationships you form with your peers and professors in seminary are what will get you through your first five years. It's important to invest in those who have been there before and will be on the same journey as you will, so that you can find support for those unexpected challenges."

Wonderfully, along with the challenges of ordained ministry come great rewards. "We have been blessed by the congregation of First Plymouth, its ministerial staff, and our community friends in more ways than we can count," says Chris. "Michigan has become our home—my wife and I have now lived here longer than any in other location since we got married—and we love it!"

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