Charlie Cotherman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Charles E. Cotherman is the **Executive Director** of the **Center for Rural Ministry (CRM)** at Grove City College.

Charlie, an'06 graduate of GCC, returned to his alma mater in 2019 as a founding member of the **Project on Rural Ministry (PRM)**, where he served first as administrative director and then as program director. This five-year, Lilly-funded effort to connect college, church, and community served three cohorts of pastors in a region that stretched from southwestern NY through western Pennsylvania and easter Ohio into northern West Virginia.

As the initial project neared its conclusion, members of the PRM team discerned that the work of the PRM was worth sustaining and expanding. With the support of the PRM team and GCC administration, Charlie and a small team from within the PRM drafted a sustainability proposal to expand their work into an enduring Center for Rural Ministry. When they received word in the summer of 2023 that Lilly Endowment, Inc. had accepted their proposal, the groundwork was laid for the CRM to move from hope to reality.

In addition to serving as executive director of the CRM, Cotherman is also **Assistant Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies** at Grove City College.

A CALL TO THE CHURCH

For as long as he can remember, Charlie has had a heart for the local church. Throughout his formative years life within small, rural congregations was all he knew. The folks that made up these small congregations shaped his faith in big and enduring ways. As he left home first for college, then for a job as a high school English teacher, and later for a stint in New Haven, Connecticut, he could not shake a sense that God was calling him to serve the people and places that had served him so well.

But it was not always easy to discern what this call might look like. Even as Charlie and his wife (Aimee) left New England and undertook a season of theological education at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, it was hard to find models that explicitly focused on creating vital rural ministries or new, rural church plants. Eventually, this experience led to a holy discontent that helped prompt Charlie to become an advocate for small places and the pastors and churches that serve them.

Following the completion of his MDiv degree, Charlie was accepted as a doctoral student at the University of Virgina (UVA), where he was also awarded a prestigious fellowship by the Jefferson Scholars Foundation. As a student in UVA's Religious Studies Department, Charlie focused on the subfield of American Religious History, especially American evangelicalism, and wrote a dissertation on the history of the burgeoning Christian study center movement.

As much as he enjoyed academics, his sense of a call to the local church persisted. After four years in Charlottesville, Virginia, Charlie and Aimee followed God's call to move back home and planted Oil City Vineyard church in Oil City, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 2016.

CENTER *for* RURAL MINISTRY
at Grove City College

A CALL TO THE ACADEMY

Along with a call to the church, a call to teaching has been an enduring part of his life Charlie's life. He first honed his teaching chops in high school as a student leader in FCA and then served as a paid intern in his home youth group during college. Following college, he taught English for two years at Grove City High School in Grove City, PA. During seminary and graduate school Charlie continued to teach within the church, first as a part time young professional pastor during seminary and then as a director of men's ministry for Theological Horizons during his time at UVA. More recently, he has served as an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

A key part of Charlie's call to teach also includes writing. He is the author of To Think Christianly: A History of L'Abri, Regent College, and the Chrisitan Study Center Movement (IVP Academic) and a contributing editor of Sent to Flourish: A Guide to Planting and Multiplying Churches (IVP Academic). He has also written for a number of blogs and publications including Plough, Modern Reformation, and Evangelicals.

Personal: Outside of the classroom and his work with the local church, Charlie enjoys spending time with his Aimee and their four children. He loves coffee, sports of all kinds (but especially basketball), reading, playing guitar, pruning trees, and spending time outdoors. Charlie can be reached at charlie@ruralministry.org or on X at @CECotherman.