



Grace Gravelle

Pastor. Advocate. Former Client.

Grace Gravelle has a lot going on. And that's just the way she likes it. A recent graduate from Luther Seminary, she moved to Pennsylvania where, as a new Pastor, she's helping to redevelop a church. In Grace's line of work, an intensive interview determines whether seminary students will be good at starting churches or redeveloping them. Her results indicated she'd be good at both—an outcome she doesn't attribute to happenstance. "I credit that to the therapy that I've received and knowing who I am... what I've been through," she says.

In 1992, as a young woman struggling with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and borderline personality disorder, Grace moved into Guild Hall, a residential treatment program started by Guild Incorporated's founder, the Guild of Catholic Women. The program closed in 1994 as mental health care shifted to community-based services. "If you needed to go to a group home, Guild Hall was the one you wanted to be at," Grace recalls. "Staff was helpful, loving, and not judgmental." I'd hang out in Julie's [Grothe] and Grace's [Tangjerd Schmitt] office just to talk."

In the years that followed, Grace worked on her recovery with Guild staff alongside helping when and where needed: to find apartments and move, get jobs, and address mental and physical health issues. "Even with support, I spent many years in and out of the hospital," says Grace. "In my worst days, it was my Guild Case

Managers who kept the faith. They never gave up on me; they gave their time and skills to build me up."

Bolstered by her Guild team, Grace eventually pursued her goal of returning to college. She remembers fondly a card she received from the team when she made it into the Honors Society, "They told me how proud they were of me." In 2008, she graduated with honors for academic achievement in psychology. A year later, she "graduated" from Guild's services, too.

Today, Grace can't help but to draw a parallel between the way she was treated by Guild staff—staff member Julie Grothe participated in the service for her ordination—and the way she intends to approach her own work: "I'm going to welcome people to church as they are, rather than asking them to change to fit what we are."

Photo: Grace Gravelle