BGAV’s Spence Network Spotlights Uptick Alumni

The word *uptick* is defined as a small increase. An uptick in a certain activity is seen as something making a significant movement. Through the Spence Network, the BGAV invests in the “small increases” by offering networking and mentoring opportunities to eager and innovative leaders who in turn make an impact on the local church.

Since 2008, 136 young leaders have come through the Uptick program. These members are serving across Virginia, the United States, and as far as Norway. By the end of 2017, the total number of Uptick alumni will increase to 167.

**Nabeel Qureshi**, alumnus of the Uptick class of 2011, is a renowned speaker and writer. He wrote the *New York Times* bestseller, *No God but One: Allah or Jesus?*, and the follow-up book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, which is the only book ever to win Christian Book Awards for both “Best New Author” and “Best Nonfiction.” *Christianity Today* featured Qureshi as one of “33 Under 33,” in a cover story on emerging religious leaders. Born in the US and raised as a devout Muslim, Nabeel found Christ through many discussions with Christian friends. He talks about his spiritual development in *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, and in the follow-up, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus Video Study*. He recently published *Answering Jihad*, which delves into jihad, the rise of ISIS, and Islamic terrorism. Nabeel is a lifelong student, holding multiple degrees in medicine, Christian apologetics, and religion; and is pursuing a doctorate in New Testament studies at Oxford University. Recently, he was diagnosed with stage 4 stomach cancer. The BGAV requests prayers for Nabeel’s complete healing and comfort as he endures
chemotherapy. To keep others informed of his progress, Nabeel vlogs about his story on YouTube and Facebook.

Another 2011 Uptick alumni, Brad Rhodes, with his band, MELODIME, created a nonprofit organization—Now I Play Along Too—to provide musical instruments and instruction to children who are in difficult situations. Now I Play Along Too’s first project was at the Source of Light Center in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2014. MELODIME arrived with over 30 instruments and spent a week teaching the children and setting up continued instruction through local music teachers. They have returned several times to lead music camps, most recently in August 2016.

Katie McKown joined Uptick in 2013 and is currently serving as pastor of Scottsville Baptist Church, Scottsville. She is the first female pastor called to the historical church, and she also serves on BGAV Executive Board. In addition, she is co-leading a new US/Canada Uptick group called “NABWU” (North American Board Women’s Union), which is the North American branch of the Baptist World Alliance Women’s Department.