

MISSION  
TO NORTH  
AMERICAWorking Together to  
Transform North America

## Mission Report:

## Reaching Across Cultures: Brazilian Churches Spread the Gospel

**Dear Friends:** In describing the North American population, one word comes to mind: multicultural. The US government estimates that 32.5 million people now living in the US are foreign-born. This ever-changing population presents extraordinary ministry opportunities for the PCA, and MNA is committed to encouraging and equipping churches and presbyteries to reach this growing assembly of people groups with the Gospel.

Case in point: The progress in Brazilian church planting and the work of MNA Brazilian Movement Leader Renato Bernardes, which is covered in this issue. With fifteen PCA Brazilian churches and mission churches now started, Portuguese-speaking pastors and lay leaders are meeting the needs of a great many new immigrants and their children.

Today, more than 15 percent of the total number of PCA churches have major non-Anglo populations. About 10 percent are Korean language churches, while the remainder reflect a cross-section of ethnic groups. Since 1998, the total number of PCA churches with a large percentage of non-Anglo members has almost tripled, and growth is accelerating.

We rejoice in these numbers, not because of political correctness, but because they demonstrate how the Gospel is advancing in North America. There couldn't be a better time for all PCA churches to assess their communities and develop resources for reaching all people groups for Christ.

Your prayers and generous giving for Brazilian church planting, as well as for all MNA church planting efforts, are essential in reaching the multitudes, as Christ commissioned us to do. Please join us in praying for dedicated church planters and for financial resources to train and support their work. Above all, pray for a mighty work of the Spirit through His people in the PCA.



Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator

When Renato Bernardes came to the US in 1973 to study at Montclair State College in Newark, New Jersey, he and his wife, Claudia, became immersed in the area's growing Portuguese-speaking community and came to recognize a great need to minister to these people. "Because of our ministry gifts and our background," Renato recalls, "we realized the Lord had brought us here for a reason."

In 1983, Renato earned a master's degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and was ordained by the Presbyterian Church (USA), but continued to fill a management position with UPS, while ministering to Portuguese groups. Six years later, Renato joined the PCA and became involved with Comunidade Crista Presbiteriana in Newark, which was pastored by Nelio DaSilva, the first MNA Brazilian Movement Leader.

Several years later, Nelio left Comunidade Crista and the Lord called Renato to fill his position as pastor. In 2003, Renato began serving as MNA Brazilian Movement Leader providing guidance in planting PCA churches for the growing numbers of Portuguese-speaking people in North America. (Valter Moura and Osni Ferreira served as Movement Leaders between Nelio and Renato.)

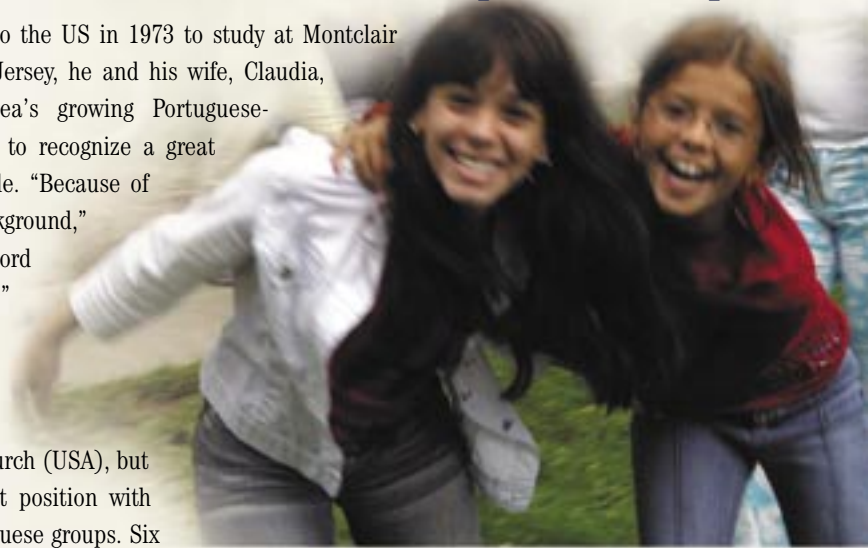
***One of the most critical needs Renato has seen as the ministry in Newark has grown is for effective outreach to the second generation Portuguese-speaking population.*** He believes it is essential to create a church atmosphere that better reflects what life in America looks like for this group. "At one church, we saw second generation immigrants leave because they didn't feel like they fit," Renato recalls. "It wasn't beneficial for them to attend a strictly Portuguese-speaking church because they were also using English. We needed to combine the languages to be more inviting, and we are now seeing a need to include Spanish."

While meeting the needs of the Portuguese-speaking immigrants and their children, such as job training, English classes, and day care, these church plants focus most on meeting their spiritual needs. At Comunidade Crista,

*(Continued next page)*



Many second generation Portuguese-speaking people are raised with two different languages and cultures, which creates a set of unique challenges. To help address their needs, Brazilian PCA churches implement specific youth programs, including after-school events and music and drama ministries.



In North America, the Portuguese-speaking population is growing. Today, about 230,000 live in metro New York, which includes New York City and parts of New Jersey and Connecticut, an estimated 150,000 each live in Boston and south Florida. With immigration continuing, Brazilian PCA pastors and lay leaders are joining together to help this people group adjust to life in a new country.

Renato Bernardes, who pastors Comunidade Crista in Newark, New Jersey, also serves as MNA Brazilian Movement Leader. He and other Portuguese-speaking pastors reach out to their communities by offering the practical assistance desperately needed by new immigrants, such as job placement, English classes, translation services, day care, and personal counseling.



There are currently 15 PCA churches and mission churches in areas in North America where the Portuguese-speaking population is strong, along with several more in development. (See back page for complete church listing.) The Lord has used a dedicated alliance of Brazilian PCA pastors and leaders, pictured here, to share the Gospel with this people group. Their goal is to plant two new churches a year in similar areas. "We pray that many people will find hope in Jesus Christ and that lives will be changed through this work," Renato says. "And that Brazilian/Portuguese-speaking individuals will become leaders in the PCA to continue these efforts."

### Brazilian Churches (Continued)

Renato is seeing God's message of hope spread. With a congregation of 320 adults and 100 children, about 40 percent came to Christ at Comunidade; and overall, in Portuguese-speaking churches, 20 percent join as adults on profession of faith in Christ.

"One of the most rewarding things I see is the enthusiasm and dedication for evangelism," Renato relates. "Right now, we're doing a program about Christian living, which is mobilizing the congregation. They invite neighbors and friends to participate and, in advance, devote five nights to prayer, asking God to send people for the program. I am amazed that even though these people work full-time jobs, they're still willing to spend time praying for God to use them."

**Each new church plant looks for ways to serve the community.** While Renato and the other

Brazilian pastors all employ mercy ministries, several churches have thrived with specific programs. In Marietta, Georgia, Christ Presbyterian, pastored by Legree Finch, Jr., has developed outreach to the Brazilian community through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. For more than a year, about 50 people have attended the classes, led by Silas J. Santos, the church's leader for Brazilian Outreach Ministry. Silas uses Bible studies to teach English, as well as to introduce Christ to the students.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, Christ the King, under the leadership of Brazilian pastor Naama Mendes, ministers to the Portuguese-speaking community through multiplication cell groups. These groups focus on discipleship and on training participants to form their own small groups. Many of the groups target specific ages and networks, such as women's groups, men's groups, and groups for youth and children. The success of these efforts has not only been seen at Christ the King, but also in other Portuguese-speaking congregations in the US.

New Life Presbyterian in Framingham, Massachusetts, a church plant of Christ the King, is pastored by Manoel de Oliveira. New Life utilizes a TV program that "broadcasts our services to our town, as well as 26 other towns in the Boston area," Manoel reports. "It's an outreach for the Kingdom of God. All those who watch don't come to our church, but we nurture them in the Gospel, and they continue or further their involvement in their local churches."

Proclamation Community Church in Port Chester, New York, combines several cultural/ethnic groups. In order to bridge a large gap between cultures and socioeconomic status, the church, led by pastor Christian Castro from Brazil, and his wife Liz from Mexico, included Spanish, Portuguese, and English from the start.

**Renato says that serving several cultures in one congregation is an emerging requirement.** "We need

to expand beyond Brazilians and include outreach to Portuguese-speaking people from Portugal, Africa, and other countries." Many of the churches are already seeing the fruits of these efforts. *For more information about Multicultural Ministries, visit [www.pcanet.org/mna](http://www.pcanet.org/mna).*



Every Labor Day weekend, Brazilian PCA churches gather together to promote continued community development, focusing on church planting and sharing resources. The retreat is led in Portuguese, English, and Spanish. "We include all three languages to make everyone feel at home," Renato says. "We are not going to split over culture." This year, more than 500 people attended the retreat in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.



## MNA Disaster Response Shares Christ's Love with Hurricane Victims

When MNA Disaster Response Director Ron Haynes and his wife, Judy, headed for southwest Florida in the middle of August to assist in the clean-up of Hurricane Charley, they never imagined they would stay for three more hurricanes. But as we all have seen, Florida has been battered by multiple hurricanes one after another. Ron and Judy are seeing the devastation firsthand.

The Haynes joined MNA in 2003, with a plan to offer those affected by disasters a more personal kind of support. With the help of dedicated volunteers, they wanted to equip PCA churches with resources to assist those affected and to share the love of Christ by meeting the victims' immediate and ongoing needs. To do this, Ron and Judy made a major change in their own lives. They sold their home in St. Louis and moved into a motor home, making their ministry more mobile and allowing them more time to build relationships in the communities.

Although some PCA churches and families experienced damage from Charley, clean-up efforts weren't as widespread as expected. This gave the volunteers the opportunity to work in the local community, handing out literature from the neighboring PCA churches and letting the residents know they were there to help.

***"People would come out of their homes and cry when they saw the volunteers,"*** Judy says. "They wanted to know who we were and why we were there. Those questions presented a great opportunity to share the Lord's love. They were so appreciative when the volunteers just sat and cried with them and prayed." Ron and Judy set up a staging area for the volunteers at Covenant Life Presbyterian, pastored by Larry Edison, in Sarasota, giving the volunteers a place to be housed and fed and to rest. "That was an awesome blessing," Judy praises.

The relief efforts for Charley were halted when Hurricane Frances headed for the East Coast. Damage caused by Frances was widespread and relief efforts expanded across the state, but in a matter of days, Hurricane Ivan devastated Pensacola. Teams were left in Sarasota to finish the clean-up from Charley and Frances, while Ron and Judy traveled to begin a response to Ivan. "We set up a staging area at McIlwain Memorial Presbyterian, pastored by Rob Looper," Judy reports. "Our initial response was concentrated on helping the PCA families first, and then we were able to go out into the community and help others."

***Hundreds of volunteers in Florida have worked tirelessly*** at cutting up fallen trees, patching roofs, and clearing debris. They are also handing out much-needed supplies to residents, which Judy says is when the chance to share the Gospel is the greatest. As Ron and Judy assessed damage from the latest hurricane, Jeanne, they also mobilized teams to continue clean-up from Charley, Frances, and Ivan. In addition to volunteers, Ron and Judy emphasize the continuous need for financial support, and above all, prayer. *To learn about specific prayer requests and how to become a volunteer, visit Disaster Response at [www.pcanet.org/mna](http://www.pcanet.org/mna).*



***"When the disaster strikes, we work with local churches and their presbyteries to research and assess the stricken community's needs. Then, we use our volunteer database to match the situation to the volunteers' skills and their geographical proximity to the problem area."***

Ron Haynes, MNA Disaster Response Director

The greatest challenge the Disaster Response team has faced is that of recruiting enough volunteers. "We've had volunteers come from as far away as Pennsylvania and Delaware, and we are so thankful for them," Judy says. "But we still need more because physical help has been the greatest challenge. When the media stops covering the hurricanes, that doesn't mean the need is gone." Judy says the only requirement she and Ron look for in volunteers is a servant's heart.



## Help Others Hear the Good News

*Share God's Promises with People in the US and Canada*

As part of God's Great Commission, MNA seeks to spread the Gospel's hopeful message throughout North America, and to do this, we need strong supporters to walk with us. Your financial gifts have an integral part in helping us change lives in the name of Jesus Christ. You may give online on the Web\* or mail gifts to MNA. (See address in lower right margin.) Together, we can share the grace and mercy of our Lord with others.

### STAYING CONNECTED

The Second Generation Korean Pastors Conference is January 24–26, 2005, at Emanuel Church in Philadelphia, PA. For more details, visit the Web\* . . . Briarwood Presbyterian in Birmingham, AL, is hosting the From Embers to a Flame Conference on January 20–23, 2005. For more information, contact Carolyn Phillips at [cphillips@briarwood.org](mailto:cphillips@briarwood.org). In addition, the Korean Eastern Presbytery in New York, NY, will also hold the From Embers to a Flame Conference on February 15–17, 2005. Contact Young Song at [ysong@briarwood.org](mailto:ysong@briarwood.org) for more details. More information is also available at [www.emberstoafire.org](http://www.emberstoafire.org). . . Have you considered starting English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as a ministry to the nations around your church and community? Or are you already involved in ESL and want to improve it? Check MNA's Web site\* or contact Deb Parker at [dparker@pcanet.org](mailto:dparker@pcanet.org) for more information about the 2005 ESL Conference at Briarwood in Birmingham, AL, on March 17–19. . . Join us in praying for church plants and church planters throughout North America who are working to further the Kingdom of God. Visit the Intercessor page on the Web\* for specific prayer requests, or if you prefer to receive Intercessor in print, call 678-825-1239, email [jclark@pcanet.org](mailto:jclark@pcanet.org), or mail to John Clark, MNA, 1700 N. Brown Rd., Ste. 101, Lawrenceville, GA 30043. . . The PCA Foundation offers a new 20-minute video, *Using Your Resources for Kingdom Purposes*, which defines the Foundation and demonstrates how its charitable financial services benefit churches, ministries, individuals, and families. The free video includes firsthand accounts of how the Foundation has helped Christians use their "God-given" resources. To order: call 800-700-3221 or email [pcf@pcanet.org](mailto:pcf@pcanet.org). To view the video: log on to [www.pcanet.org/foundation](http://www.pcanet.org/foundation) (Broadband access required).

\*[www.pcanet.org/mna](http://www.pcanet.org/mna)

## Encouraging Compassion in Action

*2005 MNA Mercy Ministry Conference*

The MNA Mercy Ministry Conference on April 14–16, 2005, offers lay leaders an opportunity for practical, hands-on workshops, focusing on topics such as inner-city ministry, outreach to senior adults, mercy in the Hispanic community, and prison ministry. The conference, entitled "Enriching the Kingdom – Impacting Church, Community, and Culture," will be held at the Airport Hilton in Atlanta, Georgia, and includes speakers Amy Sherman, an advisor to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the Urban Ministries Advisor for Trinity Presbyterian in Charlottesville, Virginia; Mo Leverett, founder and director of Desire Street Ministries in New Orleans, Louisiana; and Mike Higgins, pastor of Redemption Fellowship in Atlanta, Georgia, and a chaplain in the US Army Reserves. For more information, visit MNA on the Web\*.



### *Urgent Need:* Relief Aid for Haiti

Last spring's floods, combined with the more recent force of Hurricane Jeanne, have devastated Haiti. Thousands of lives were lost, many people were left homeless, and children were orphaned. With the country already in dire need of medical providers, MNA Haitian Movement Leader Dony St. Germain has coordinated medical teams to visit and assist these overwhelmed people and is continuing to gather much-needed supplies. "The devastation is incomprehensible," he reported earlier this fall. "In Gonaives, Haiti, it is said that any child born today will not be able to survive."

In addition to your support and prayers to help rebuild Haiti, two professionals are sought for the ongoing ministry efforts to Haitians in Haiti and North America. A physician is needed in Haiti and a certified elementary teacher is needed in Miami, Florida. For more details about relief efforts or these positions, contact Dony: 305-899-5809 or [donysha@aol.com](mailto:donysha@aol.com).

### *Portuguese-Speaking PCA Churches and Mission Churches*

Comunidade Crista Presbiteriana, Mineola, NY; Renan Rodrigues, pastor

Comunidade Presbiteriana Nova Vida, Framingham, MA; Manoel de Oliveira, pastor

Igreja Presbiteriana Betel, Marlborough, MA; Dalzir DaSilva, pastor

Comunidade Crista de Danbury, Danbury, CT; Valter Moura, pastor

Igreja Presbiteriana Redentor, South River, NJ; Ederson Emerick, pastor

Igreja Presbiteriana Cristo Rei em Cambridge, Cambridge, MA; Naama Mendes, pastor

Igreja Presbiteriana Cristo Rei em Boston, Boston, MA; Laercio Rodrigues Guimaraes, pastor

Comunidade Crista Presbiteriana, Newark, NJ; Renato Bernardes, pastor

Astoria Community Church, Projecto Multicultural, Astoria, NY; David Ellis and Darcy Caires, pastors

Comunidade Crista Proclamacao, Port Chester, NY; Christian Castro, pastor

Igreja Presbiteriana Brasileira, Coconut Creek, FL; Eliel Assis, church planter

Igreja Presbiteriana Hebron, Newark, NJ; Moura Goncalves, church planter

Christ Presbyterian, Programacao de alcance da Comunidade Brasileira, Marietta, GA; Silas J. Santos, Brazilian Outreach Ministry Leader

Comunidade Crista de Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT; Valter Moura, pastor

Comunidade Crista de Hilside e Elizabeth, NJ; Gilson Quelhas, church planter

Mission to North America (MNA) serves the churches and presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), providing leadership in church planting initiatives, as well as placement and training services for church planters in the US and Canada. In addition, MNA coordinates Revitalization and Evangelism, Chaplain Ministries, Mercy Ministries and Disaster Response for the PCA in North America.

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