

MISSION
TO NORTH
AMERICAWorking Together to
Transform North America

Mission Report:

Dear Friends: As one of the largest metro areas in North America, greater Los Angeles is the home base for many of the leading influences of our society. Most of the television shows and movies that shape our culture are made there or through studios based there. Ever since its earliest days, the Los Angeles area has served as a central hub to business and entertainment throughout North America, as well as to money and politics.

Today, more than nine million people call Los Angeles and the surrounding counties their home. Amongst this number are a great many people whose daily experience keeps them in dejection and despair. *Vision LA*, the church planting effort featured in this newsletter, is seeking to bring hope to the lost and to introduce them to a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The growing church planting efforts in the Los Angeles area are in keeping with the central vision of Mission to North America — to ignite a powerful church planting movement that will impact the continent with the Gospel of Christ. It's about going into communities and meeting the residents where they are found, with what they need. And it's about showing them where to find hope.

Mission to North America is committed to this end, and I invite you to join us in prayer and support to help spread the Good News of the Lord's promises. Please join with us in trusting the Lord for the goals of *Vision LA*; pray especially for the Los Angeles area's church planters that God will equip them, encourage them, and use them to further his Kingdom — and that God will greatly add to their number.



Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator



Vision LA Shares Christ in the Cultural Bedrock of America

The Los Angeles (LA) area is a uniquely diverse community. Known for its glitz and glamour, rich men and beautiful women, the LA area is home to more than nine million people. It is where Hollywood's actors live, where almost every culture from around the world is represented, and where the Gospel message of grace is desperately needed.

Scott Bridges, pastor at Christ Presbyterian in Santa Barbara explains, "It's a different kind of world. It's exciting to live where pop culture is being generated, but what we find behind the excitement are people who are hungry to find a place to call home."

Seeking to provide that home is Vision LA, a church planting effort of Pacific Presbytery, with participation from Mission to North America (MNA). Pacific Presbytery stretches from Santa Barbara and Bakersfield down to Las Vegas and back to LA. With 14 PCA churches, eight of which are still in the church plant stage, and a Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) campus minister, Geoff Shaw, at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Scott and the other church planters are bringing the Gospel to people proud of their secular lives or variety of religions — and they are seeing people come to Christ.

As church planters, Scott and Bill Powis, pastor at Pacific Crossroads in Santa Monica, came to the area wanting to do what most church planters set out to do: to answer God's call-

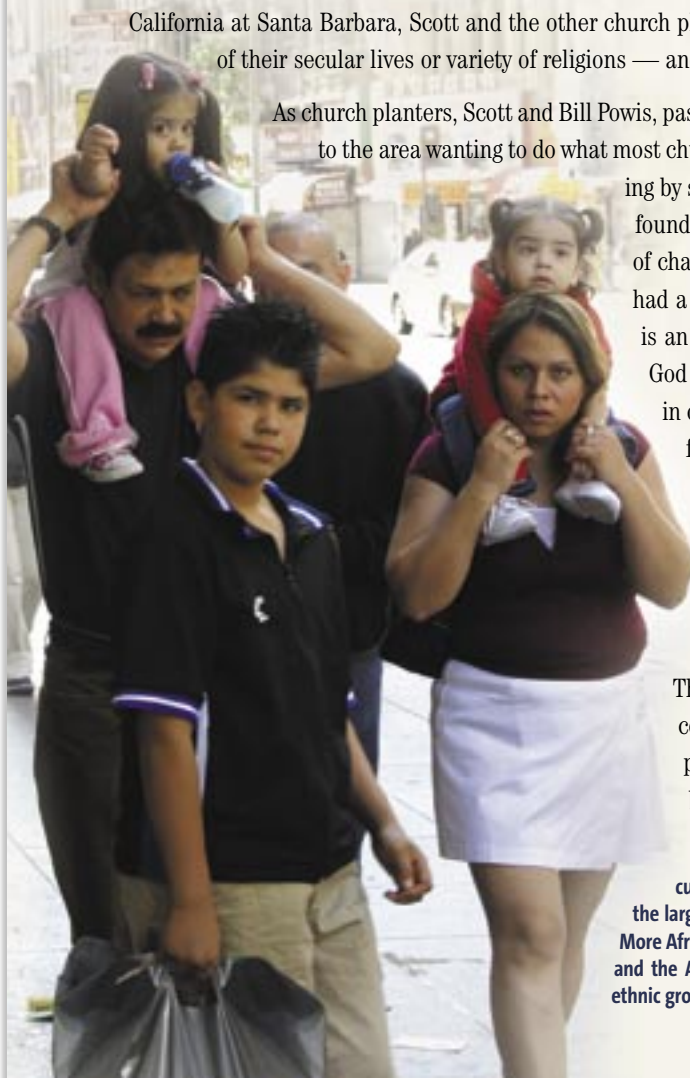
ing by spreading the truth of the Gospel. But what they found was a unique community with a different set of challenges. "In the past, PCA church planters have had a difficult time surviving here," Scott says. "This is an area in love with itself. But now we are seeing God do tremendous things. God has gathered people in our churches who are growing into a strong base for ministry. Frankly, we're having a wonderful time just trying to keep up with Him!"

Scott indicates one of the differences in church planting in the LA area is that programs don't work.

"People are increasingly leery of programs. They don't want to participate in anything that could uncover and expose them. They want a safe place to listen or share opinions. They want to build relationships."

(Continued next page)

Pastor Bill Powis describes the LA area as "the breadth of cultural diversity." In 2000, Latinos had replaced whites as the largest ethnic group in both the city and Los Angeles County. More African Americans reside in California than in any other state, and the Asian American population has become the third largest ethnic group in the LA area.



“People are looking for a safe place that allows them to be anonymous or to share as much as they want. They are looking for connections, and we are providing relationships. In this context, they are open to the Gospel.” Pastor Scott Bridges



In their efforts to plant healthy, thriving, Gospel-centered churches in the LA area, the pastors and church planters of *Vision LA* support each other through encouragement, prayer, and accountability. Standing from left: Stew Fleeman, ruling elder, Covenant Church in Bakersfield; Roy Bennett, pastor, Christ Church Ojai; Jason Mather, church planter, Long Beach; and Bill Powis, pastor, Pacific Crossroads in Santa Monica. Seated from left: Ray Larsen, ruling elder, Christ Church Pasadena; and Scott Bridges, pastor, Christ Presbyterian in Santa Barbara.

Vision LA Shares Christ in the Cultural Bedrock of America (Continued)

Mark Kuiper, church planter and pastor for Christ Church Pasadena, says making a strong connection and forming relationships is essential in getting visitors to return. An important aspect of those relationships, Mark explains, is that the visitors realize it's a church of real people. "They see that everyone, from the pastor on down, is in need of a Savior. They find out the glory of God, His greatness, is that we can have a relationship with our Savior."

The emphasis on relationships also extends to the church planters. Because of the hard times church planters have experienced in the past, the pastors and church planters have formed a strong bond with each other that helps them through the struggles. They get together frequently to deepen friendships, to encourage one another, and to pray. When talking with a potential church planter, Scott asks, "Can you be family?" "We're tight," he says. "To come here you need to be committed to being family. These men grip me when I need it, and I've got a shoulder to cry on when I need it. Through mutual encouragement and support, we experience God's grace keeping us strong." Even though anxious to see many more church planters join them, those who are already in place realize the necessity of a real call of God to minister in this area.

This powerful camaraderie played a substantial role in Brannin Pitre's decision to head to the area as a church planter in early 2005. "When we visited with the men in California, we could easily see the bond between them as they co-labor for the Gospel in the greater Los Angeles basin. It is a team effort they are trying to convey, and it is working." Currently assisting on the developmental side of *Vision LA*, Brannin is creating awareness within the PCA of the LA area's needs, with individuals concerned about the LA area, and with individuals and ministries beyond the PCA. "The area is changing every day. Its openness to Christianity is changing. More people are now willing to listen to the truth of the Gospel. We need to be ready to care for their needs by extending the transforming love of our Savior spiritually, socially, and culturally."

Collaborating with other organizations and ministries outside the PCA is a key element to church planting in the LA area. This is a place where those who truly name the name of Christ must put aside ordinary divisions and work together for the advancement of the Gospel.

Members of Christ Presbyterian in Santa Barbara work on Habitat for Humanity projects and volunteer at the local rescue mission. Scott emphasizes that the commonality between the church and the other organizations is that they are "like-minded." Christ Presbyterian and Pacific Crossroads have taken great strides to form prayer alliances with other Christian churches in their respective areas. They pray for each other and their communities, especially the city leaders and prominent citizens who have substantial influence over the areas.

Another significant area for opportunity in the LA area is college ministry. Scott reports that there are more colleges and universities in the area than in the entire state of Texas, and the strength of the one RUF campus ministry at the University of California at Santa Barbara under the leadership of Geoff Shaw is evident.



Owen Lee, pastor and church planter at New Life Church in Burbank, explains his biggest challenge is trying to overcome the success driven attitude dominant in the affluent communities and encourage the people to lift their eyes toward heaven. "We seek to help them let go of this world and embrace Christ, to see their true inheritance."



"The school is academically rigorous," Scott relates. "There are a lot of parties, a lot of liberalism. They are not seeking out a reformed faith. But Geoff has an amazing ministry. He is faithful to go after both covenant kids and those who need Christ. Only a few of the growing number of college students involved have PCA backgrounds, but they come because they've found people who love them."

At Pacific Crossroads in Santa Monica, the congregation teams up with other organizations in the community to help the urban poor and needy, specifically with homeless shelters and pregnancy resources. "There are many service organizations in the area that offer hands-on ministry," Pastor Bill Powis says. "The organizations have made an impact with the residents, who don't realize they are run by Christians."

With several church planters considering calls to the LA area, and praying for many more, Scott says the goals for *Vision LA* are considerable, but achievable. "We're planning and praying for 25 church plants by 2020 and at least three new RUF ministries. **Right now, there is one PCA church or mission for every 1.6 million people in the LA area. We're praying that God will provide continued funding and the right people to plant many more churches.**" For more information about Vision LA, contact Scott Bridges at 805-692-2078 or sabridges@cpcsb.org.



Pastor Jason Mather, church planter in Long Beach, and his wife, Olivia, say the first thing that attracted them to the area was the diversity. "Long Beach is a port city and has attracted people from all over the world. This gives us an incredible opportunity to share Christ with the nations right in our backyard."

Become a Part of the Vision

Led by a strong family of pastors and church planters, *Vision LA* is spreading the hope of Jesus Christ in a place reluctant to listen — the Los Angeles area. It's an area in critical need of the Gospel, and you can play an important role in the PCA's outreach in these diverse cities. Specifically, *Vision LA* is seeking additional church planters to serve in the area along with those who will support them in prayer and financially. For more information, contact Scott Bridges at 805-692-2078 or sabridges@cpcsb.org.



MNA Disaster Response Prepares for Future Needs

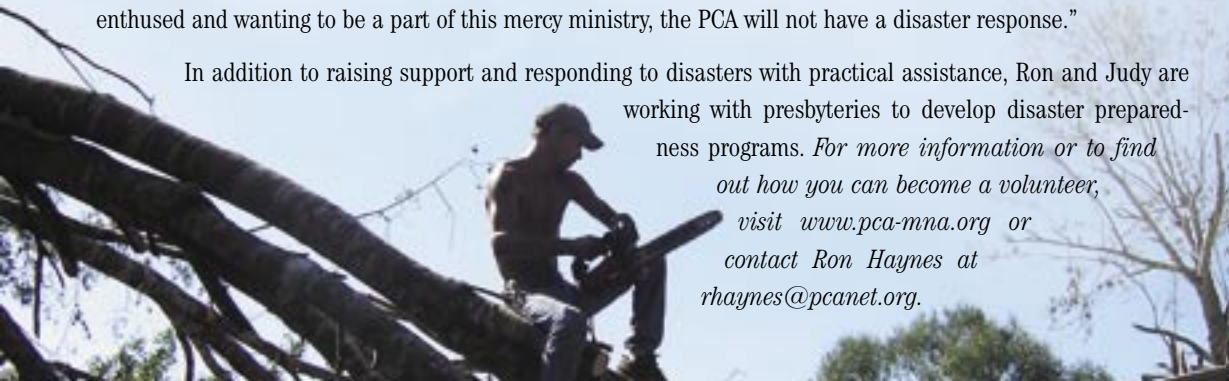
This past fall, Florida was devastated by four hurricanes within the span of six weeks.

MNA Disaster Response Director Ron Haynes and his wife, Judy, headed to the area in August just after the first hurricane hit, to assist the victims and offer support to the PCA churches and families. Joined by volunteers from across the PCA, Ron and Judy were able not only to aid in clearing debris and helping with other practical needs, but also to share Christ's love with those in desperate situations.

Even though volunteers and funds are no longer needed and some time has passed, many of those who experienced loss are still waiting on insurance settlements or contractors in order to continue with rebuilding their homes and lives. ***Pray for them as they continue in this long-term recovery process.***

As Ron and Judy continue working with local PCA churches and their members to get the financial assistance they need, they are also looking toward the future. "This is about our people," Ron says. "Without our people being enthused and wanting to be a part of this mercy ministry, the PCA will not have a disaster response."

In addition to raising support and responding to disasters with practical assistance, Ron and Judy are working with presbyteries to develop disaster preparedness programs. *For more information or to find out how you can become a volunteer, visit www.pca-mna.org or contact Ron Haynes at rhaynes@pcanet.org.*



The Florida hurricane response was the first for MNA Disaster Response. Director Ron Haynes explains, "As MNA Disaster Response grows, we will eventually be able to stay longer and work on the rebuilding phase with construction teams and with counselors as the depression sets in. This will come as our network of volunteers grows."

Equipping Churches in Gospel Outreach

Known for his incredible servant's heart and passion for prayer, Archie Parrish has dedicated his life to advancing the Gospel. For four decades, Archie has served as a faithful evangelist and pastor. Most recently, he served as MNA Church Vitality Coordinator, where he provided churches and individuals with the resources to spread the Gospel and renew churches. At the end of 2004, Archie concluded his full-time ministry with MNA to enjoy more time with his family. Archie will continue to offer training and leadership resources through his own organization, Serve International.



Furthering Church Vitality, MNA will continue to provide services, using the name Revitalization and Evangelism. The ongoing program will have a two-fold emphasis. First, it will place a heightened emphasis on the vitality of the church and on evangelism in the church planting work of MNA. Many churches that are planted often require revitalization four to seven years after starting. MNA will work more intentionally toward the goal of planting biblically healthy churches and keeping them on a strong track by providing intensive, effective training and coaching for church planters. Second, for existing churches that need to be revitalized in their ministries, MNA will offer some direct services and will identify Revitalization and Evangelism resources that can effectively address these needs. *For more information about MNA Revitalization and Evangelism, visit www.pca-mna.org.*



Opportunities Abound in Chaplain Ministries *by Dave Peterson*

For the first time in the history of the US Military Academy at West Point, there are two PCA Chaplains assigned to serve the cadets in the Cadet Chapel. Chaplain James Carter, pastor (right), and Chaplain Keith Goode, associate pastor (left), lead 800–1000 faculty and cadets in the worship of the Living Savior each Sunday. Helping the cadets find faith in Christ and support for their time at West Point is the focus of the ministry at the Cadet Chaplain's Office.

Please pray for the work these men do. Pray also for the Chaplaincy work of MNA. There are currently 100 Chaplains deployed in foreign lands. The need is great for your support both in prayer and giving. May God bless His servants at West Point and around the world as each seeks to serve God by serving his country.

50 Days of Prayer 2005: *The Parables of Jesus*

Each year, Christian Education and Publications (CE&P) and Mission to North America (MNA) join forces in calling our denomination to 50 Days of Prayer for our General Assembly. This year, Mike Ross, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian, Jackson, Mississippi, will lead us through a series of devotions focusing on the parables of Jesus Christ. The devotional begins on Tuesday, May 5, the National Day of Prayer, and concludes June 23, the week after the close of the PCA General Assembly in Chattanooga, Tennessee.



The daily devotional entries will be available for viewing online at the MNA Web site* this spring. You can also order a copy of the

booklet. Printed copies are available by pre-order only, ranging from \$5 to \$6, depending on quantity (plus shipping and handling). The order deadline is April 6, 2005. To order, contact the Christian Education and Publications bookstore at bookstore@pcanet.org or visit www.cepbookstore.com.

STAYING CONNECTED

Briarwood Presbyterian in Birmingham, Alabama, is hosting this year's **English as a Second Language (ESL) conference**, March 17–19, sponsored by MNA. The conference welcomes anyone interested in ESL ministry, whether you have an established program or are just starting out. For more information, contact Deb Parker at 678-825-1253 or dparker@pcanet.org . . . On June 13–18, 2005, Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, will host the **Christian Economic Development Institute**. This opportunity offers practical training to equip your church or ministry to implement church-based strategies that promote financial self-sufficiency among the poor. To find out more, email cedi@covenant.edu, call 706-419-1805, or visit MNA on the Web* . . . The Korean Northeast Presbytery in Bayside, New York, is hosting the **From Embers to a Flame conference** on March 14–17, 2005. Contact Young Song at ysong@briarwood.org for more information. Briarwood Presbyterian is also holding the **From Embers to a Flame conference** on Sept. 22–25, 2005. For more information, visit www.emberstoafame.org.
*www.pca-mna.org

Compassion in Action

The 2005 MNA Mercy Ministry conference is April 14–16 at the Airport Hilton in Atlanta, Georgia. A gathering for lay leaders seeking to enrich their mercy ministries, this year's conference topics include inner-city ministry, outreach to senior adults, mercy in the Hispanic community, and prison ministry. Join 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: www.pca-mna.org.

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.

For a list of MNA staff, visit our Web site: www.pca-mna.org.

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