MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA
Presbyterian Church in America

Summer 2005

Multiply

Profiling God's Great Work in North America

Dear Friends: To its residents and visitors, Utah presents breathtaking landscapes nestled against the picturesque backdrop of the Wasatch Mountains. The state offers outdoor enthusiasts a plethora of opportunities for adventures, including several popular ski resorts. Also within Utah's communities is the significant influence of one of the fastest growing world religions of our time – the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In this issue of *Multiply*, you will read about *Team Utah*. The team is made up of five PCA church planters who are seeking to enmesh themselves in this distinct culture and spread the truth of the Gospel. These churches are, as yet, the only PCA presence in the state. But through prayerful consideration and careful planning, *Team Utah* is building a foundation for many more PCA churches to enrich the Lord's Kingdom in the region.

With both prayer and financial support from churches and committed individuals across the PCA, the Utah church planting team is expanding and growing – creating a movement of Gospel-centered outreach to a works-based society. Their work is a crucial piece of the Great Commission Jesus called us to. It's a foreign mission field right here within the bounds of North America.

I ask you to join us in prayer for the Lord's blessing on this ministry. As part of any church planting effort, financial support is critical to moving forward. Please prayerfully consider this type of support for *Team Utah*. Pray also that the Lord will lift up leaders and provide additional resources for the strategic development of the Utah initiatives. Finally, pray for these five men, their families, and their congregations, that the Lord will equip and encourage them in the fruitful outreach He has called them to undertake.

Jim Bland

Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator

The Gospel of Christ Resonates in Utah

From the affluent ski resorts of Park City to the working class families in the Jordans, five PCA church planters are building a foundation in the state of Utah securely communicating the acceptance and forgiveness found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Described as a "pioneer field" for Christian evangelism by Phil Stogner, church planter of Park City Presbyterian, Utah is most widely known as the headquarters for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), commonly referred to as Mormons. With 80 percent of the roughly 2.3 million Utah residents active LDS members, the group's influence goes beyond religion and saturates the state's entire culture. Those who don't follow Mormonism are a very distinct minority, with Christians representing about two percent of the population.

The Angel Moroni is a key figure of the Mormon faith. Moroni is a prophet in the Book of Mormon and is said to have returned to earth to prepare Joseph Smith to receive the words found in the Book of Mormon. Statues of the Angel Moroni, like this one, which stands on the Salt Lake Temple in Salt Lake City, have become common features of LDS temples.

The Mormon impact on the state dates back to the late 1800s, when followers moved to the area and set up communities, establishing a predominantly agricultural and mining economy. Founded by Joseph Smith in 1830 in New York, the Mormon religion currently reports membership at about 12 million people worldwide.

The Mormon faith, at first glance, appears to follow Christian doctrine, and much of the church's outreach even takes on an evangelical feel. But stripped of its exterior façade, major differences emerge. In addition to the Bible, LDS claims the Book of Mormon, which was reportedly revealed to Joseph Smith, as the authoritative word of God, and the Mormon Church holds followers to a stringent set of rules in order to gain salvation and a place in heaven. The considerable influence of this religious group on the Utah area is felt far and wide – from politics to entertainment. Sam Wheatley, pastor of New Song Presbyterian in Salt Lake City, speaks of the religion's vast reach on the state's judicial system, "It's an ever-present force. You see it in the laws and regulations, and almost all state representatives have Mormon backgrounds." These significant cultural dynamics present a foreign mission field here in North America. As Phil explains, "It's an extremely isolated area not penetrated by the Gospel or the PCA."

***Seeking to increase the PCA presence in this region is* Team Utah**, a fervently committed team of five men, who, with their families, are servants in Christ, spreading the word of God's grace to communities overwhelmed by the rules and perfectionism of the Mormon culture.

(Continued)

***Team Utah* is just that – a team. The pastors and their wives and families are working united in the Gospel of Christ to show others the incredible love of the Lord. Their relationships are authentic and so too is their outreach. Back row, from left: Sam Wheatley, Shannon Howard (wife of Michael who started Grace/Layton), Lee Mashburn, Phil Stogner, and Tim Barton. Front row: Don Krafft, Elizabeth Krafft, Kate Wheatley, Laurie Mashburn, Wendy Stogner, and Vicki Barton.**

With 90 worshipers each week, Hidden Valley is the only PCA church with a building. "It's a testament to the strong bond among the five churches here," asserts Pastor Lee Mashburn. "We had the opportunity to acquire the building before we started worshiping. Grace Church gave us part of their building fund to get it. We were blown away."

The Gospel Resonates in Utah *(Continued)*

Working alongside Phil and Sam are Don Krafft, pastor of Grace Church of Utah in Layton; Lee Mashburn, pastor of Hidden Valley in Draper; and Tim Barton, pastor of Jordan Presbyterian in South Jordan. These men, each called by God to the area at different times, have formed a brotherhood in Christ, laboring together for the Kingdom.

Grace Church, planted in 1997 by Michael Howard, now a PCA chaplain, is made up of about 60 percent military families. Pastor Don Krafft (from left, with his wife, Elizabeth, and Rick, John Mark and Barbie Proffer) says, "It's difficult because these families only stay for a few years, but we are equipping them to go out through the world and minister for Christ."

"Before coming to the area in 2003, I had heard about the camaraderie these men shared," recalls Tim, the newest church planter in Utah. "Now that I'm here and a part of it, it is so much sweeter than I thought it would be. The isolation in the area drives us together. We're involved with one another constantly."

Don describes the group as extremely close. "We're so diverse. Each man has his own distinct personality, but that's the strength of the team. It's very refreshing, the honesty and transparency."

"It's like we're one church just in five locations," Sam says. "We all love each other. Each one of us has gone through challenges and the other four have rallied around him. This support extends to our families as well. This is a mission field and we need each other."

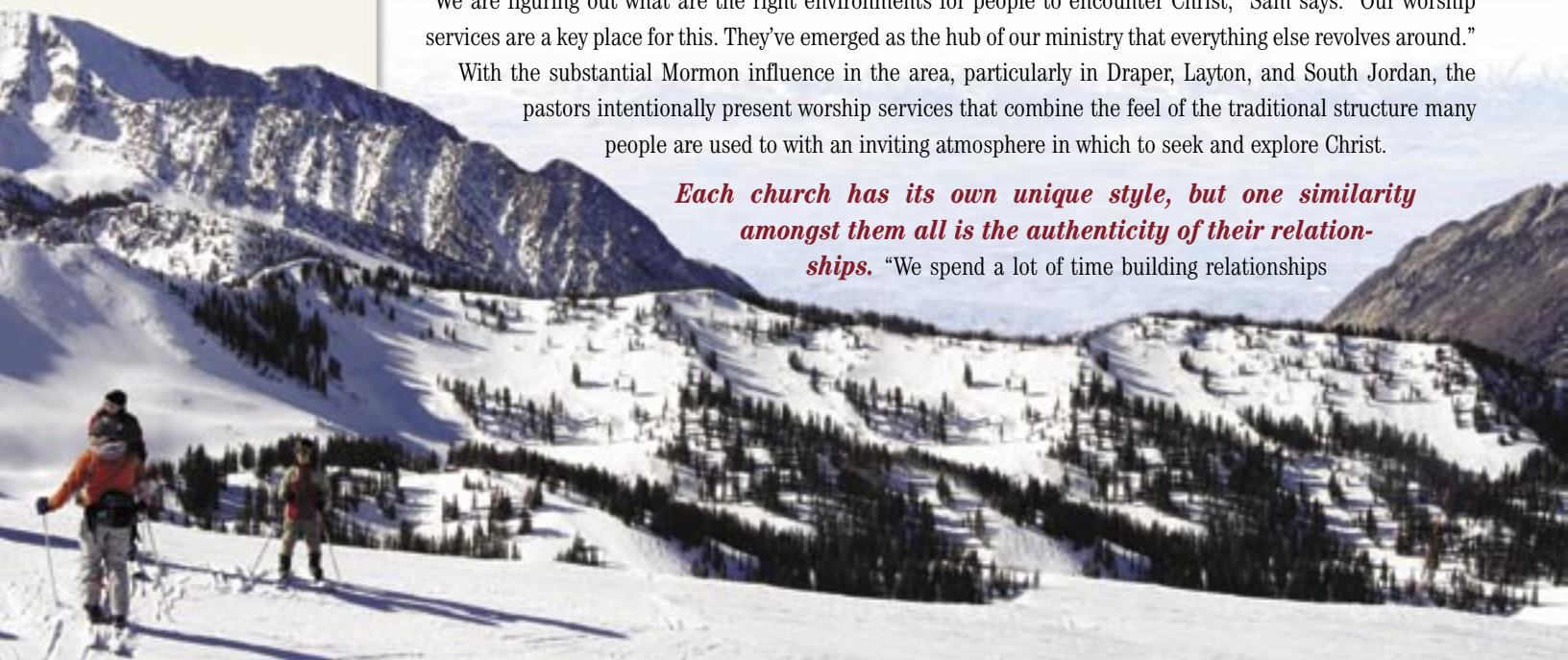
The pastors' wives have also formed a deep fellowship with one another, providing support and encouragement in their daily lives. Lee acknowledges that the relationships among the wives are often the strongest. Tim is particularly thankful for the wives welcoming his wife, Vicki, when they moved to Utah. "These relationships meant the world to Vicki. We left our extended family when we moved here, and these women became her family support." The strength of the relationships among the church planters and their families is at the core of the emerging vision of *Team Utah*. Without it, reaching out in this dominantly Mormon mentality would be almost impossible. But through continual collaboration with each other in Christ's name, these pastors are identifying areas in which to build bridges to their neighbors.

Part of this effort is evaluating each church plant and planning practical action steps tailored to the church's specific demographics to enhance its community presence. Tim explains, "It's figuring out what the community will respond to and what we can do with the resources we have."

"We are figuring out what are the right environments for people to encounter Christ," Sam says. "Our worship services are a key place for this. They've emerged as the hub of our ministry that everything else revolves around."

With the substantial Mormon influence in the area, particularly in Draper, Layton, and South Jordan, the pastors intentionally present worship services that combine the feel of the traditional structure many people are used to with an inviting atmosphere in which to seek and explore Christ.

Each church has its own unique style, but one similarity amongst them all is the authenticity of their relationships. "We spend a lot of time building relationships



Park City Presbyterian is in the heart of Utah's popular ski resorts. Pastor Phil Stogner reports the community is the most eclectic and least influenced by the Mormon religion in the state. The church started more than 11 years ago as the first PCA church in Utah. From left: Jan and Jim Schreiber, Wendy and Phil Stogner, Denise and Anthony Thomas.

within our congregations," Tim relates. "If people come in here and don't see that we love each other, they aren't going to come back. We let them know that we have a genuine love and concern for each other."

Sam also makes clear that although they present an understandable and approachable environment in which visitors are encouraged to ask questions, each church is clearly Christian. "There are similarities in the language used in Mormonism and Christianity, but there are very different meanings behind the terms. We're not afraid to tell the story of the Gospel – that we are all broken and that the Gospel repairs, restores, and redeems."

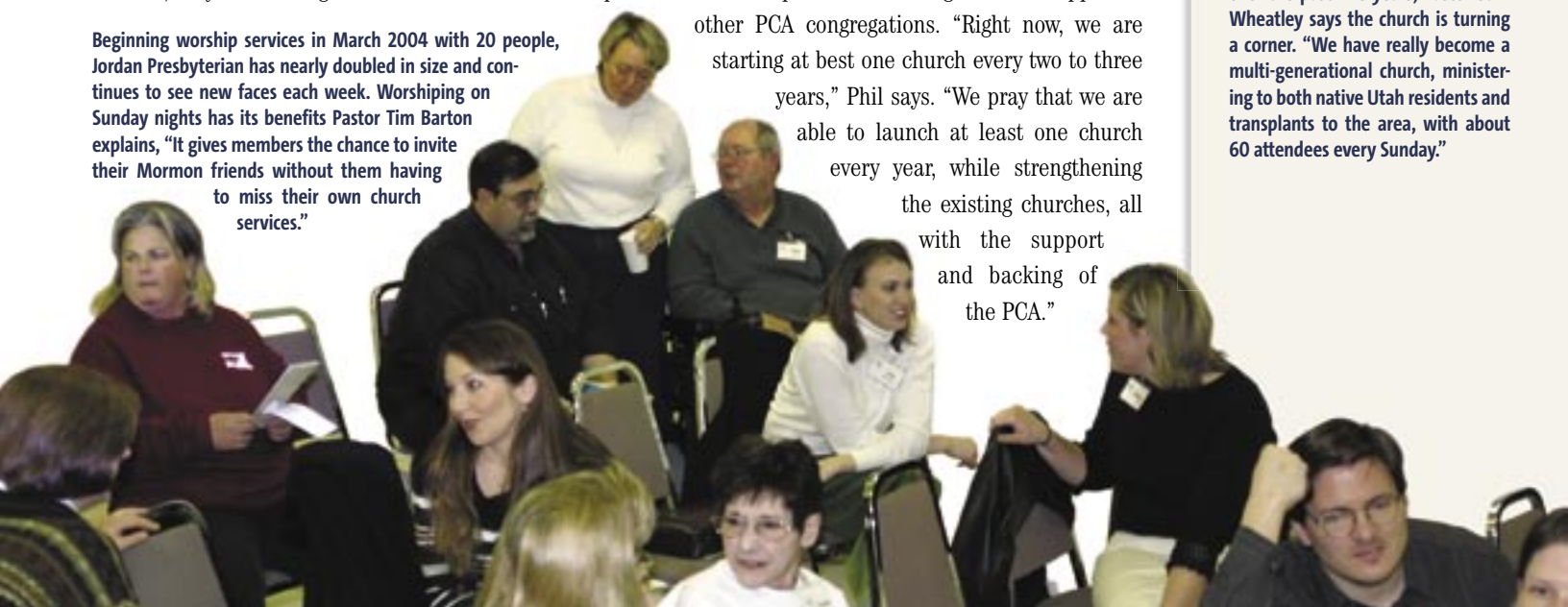
Phil adds, "This redemptive message resonates with people who have tried for so long to seek fulfillment and salvation through their own acts but who have failed. It's very freeing for people to understand that they aren't just servants of God, but also sons of God in the truest sense."

Training in evangelism with Utah's population is necessary in each church. "Evangelizing in this culture takes time," Lee explains. "People like to be good and do the right thing, but when the bottom falls out of striving to be perfect, it leaves you empty. When they get tired of religion, it's a good opening to talk about how Jesus' work was not so much about religion."

According to Phil, the Mormon impact touches everything. "From politics to media, even the school systems, there is a huge emphasis on morality, but it's a rigid framework. The grace-based message of the Gospel is very compelling in this community. In order for it to be effective though, it needs to be heard and applied. Getting the audience to listen is the difficult part."

Sam emphasizes that it's a positive approach, not an attack. "It's not 'we' against 'them.' It's getting people talking to each other and gaining a better understanding of where they are coming from. We are creating real and vibrant relationships in which we capture the imagination and find stress points where the worldview is lacking."

Going hand-in-hand with enriching and growing the existing church plants, *Team Utah* is also developing a structure that will fund and facilitate the success of additional church plants in Utah and in other areas of the West. For this, they are seeking to educate others in the unique cultural makeup of Utah and to garner the support of other PCA congregations. "Right now, we are starting at best one church every two to three years," Phil says. "We pray that we are able to launch at least one church every year, while strengthening the existing churches, all with the support and backing of the PCA."



Beginning worship services in March 2004 with 20 people, Jordan Presbyterian has nearly doubled in size and continues to see new faces each week. Worshiping on Sunday nights has its benefits Pastor Tim Barton explains, "It gives members the chance to invite their Mormon friends without them having to miss their own church services."

Team Utah *Contact Information:*

GRACE CHURCH OF UTAH
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Pastor Don Krafft:
alpinepastor@aol.com

HIDDEN VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN
www.hiddenvalleychurch.org
Pastor Lee Mashburn:
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JORDAN PRESBYTERIAN
www.jordanpresbyterian.org
Pastor Tim Barton:
timebarton@juno.com

NEW SONG PRESBYTERIAN
www.newsong.org
Pastor Sam Wheatley:
sam@newsong.org

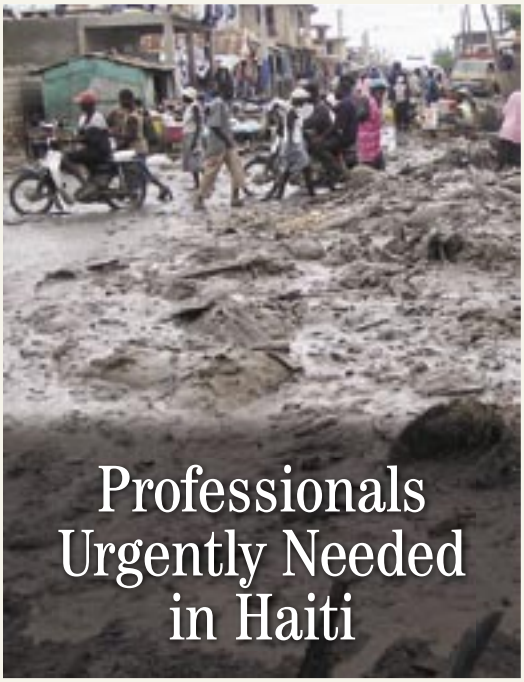
PARK CITY PRESBYTERIAN
www.parkcitychristian.com
Pastor Phil Stogner:
pcpc@sisna.com

New Song struggled in its earliest years to meet the needs of the complex community surrounding it. But over the past five years, Pastor Sam Wheatley says the church is turning a corner. "We have really become a multi-generational church, ministering to both native Utah residents and transplants to the area, with about 60 attendees every Sunday."

PCA Chaplain Ministers in Iraqi Trenches

When Army National Guard Chaplain David Gilleran thought about going on a missions trip, he figured he would go somewhere in the world for a few weeks. But through his National Guard service, the Lord called him to a year of ministry in the desert terrain and hostilities of Iraq. Mobilized in January 2004, David left behind his wife and son and headed to the Middle East. "I left the church I was pastoring and my family, but the Lord made it clear that a broader ministry was waiting for me in Iraq," he recalls. "The Lord brought me not only to another land, but He also brought the world to me. In addition to the American soldiers and civilians, I had people from 18 other countries as part of my parish."

David marveled at the opportunity to know the presence of the Lord in the place where He first confused the tongues of the nations. Together, these men and women praised the Lord and studied His Word. Passing out Bibles, answering difficult questions, and encouraging the people through their spiritual growth, David witnessed "the grace, providence, and love of God every day by the waters of Babylon." *For more information about MNA Chaplain Ministries, visit MNA on the Web at www.pca-mna.org.*



Professionals Urgently Needed in Haiti

A full-time physician is urgently needed to serve the people of Haiti. MNA Haitian Ministries Coordinator Dony St. Germain reports that this overpopulated, poor country is in desperate need of medical support. In addition, an elementary teacher is needed for a Miami school that is part of El Shaddai Presbyterian Church. A number of medical teams and construction teams have already served in Haiti; please prayerfully consider whether you can respond to this opportunity. **For more information, contact Dony at 305-899-5809 or donysha@aol.com.**

GET YOUR COPY OF THE DVD:

MNA Disaster Response Coordinates Aid to Hurricane Victims

MNA Disaster Response assisted those affected by last year's Florida hurricanes with hands-on support and outward expressions of Christ's love. Now, you can see for yourself the critical work of this ministry by requesting a DVD chronicling the response in Florida. Visit www.pca-mna.org for more information.

Thanksgiving Offering Deepens Youth Outreach in Philadelphia

Lance Lewis, left, with Butch Patrick

Through the generous support from individuals and churches within the PCA, the 2004 Thanksgiving Offering provided partial support for Ernest "Butch" Patrick to minister to the youth of west Philadelphia through Christ Liberation Fellowship. Christ Liberation Pastor Lance Lewis says, "The opportunity to have Butch work in our church and in our community has meant a great deal. He is helping to implement a leadership development program for middle school boys and providing these young men with someone to listen to them and someone they can look up to." *For information about Thanksgiving Offering 2005, contact John Clark at jclark@pcanet.org.*

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The next *From Embers to a Flame* conference, a valuable resource for church vitality, is scheduled at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 22-25, 2005, and again on January 19-22, 2006. Conference leaders also have an exciting opportunity to take this important outreach to Nairobi, Kenya, on June 6-9, 2005. For more information, visit www.emberstoaflame.org. . . . **Brazilian PCA churches in the metro New York area will host their annual Labor Day retreat in scenic Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. This major multicultural event will include both joyful Christian fellowship and intensive teaching on Gospel outreach. For more information, contact Renato Bernardes, MNA Brazilian Ministries Coordinator, at 973-465-2126 or revrb@aol.com. . . .** The next Church Planter Training is scheduled for July 25-29, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This seminar offers special church planting forums, workshops, and affinity groups. For more information, visit www.pca-mna.org.

MNA Staff Appointment

Effective January 1, 2005, MNA staff member Tim McKeown assumed a new role as Hispanic American and English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministries Coordinator, providing greater leadership to MNA outreach in these two crucial areas. Tim has served on the MNA staff for the past five years as Multicultural Ministries Coordinator.

By popular demand, MNA returns to* Multiply *as the name of the quarterly MNA newsletter, published under the name* Mission Report *for the past four issues.

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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