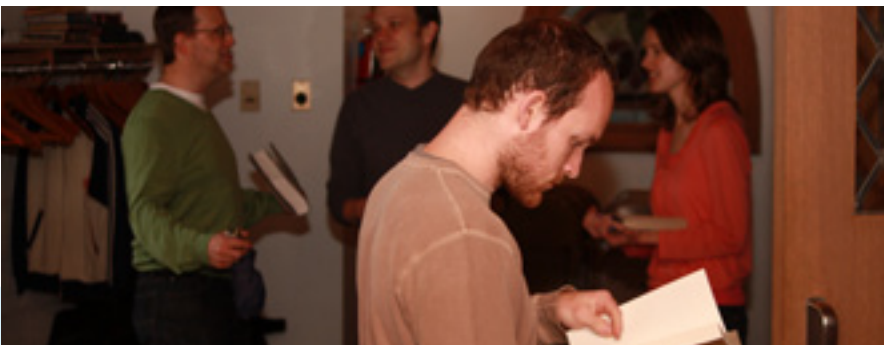




In this issue...

“Our goal with Nebraska church planting is to grow our churches primarily through reaching new people for Christ. I’ve always prayed that our churches will preach the Gospel or be shut down. Our desire is to be more and more faithful with what God has trusted to us.”

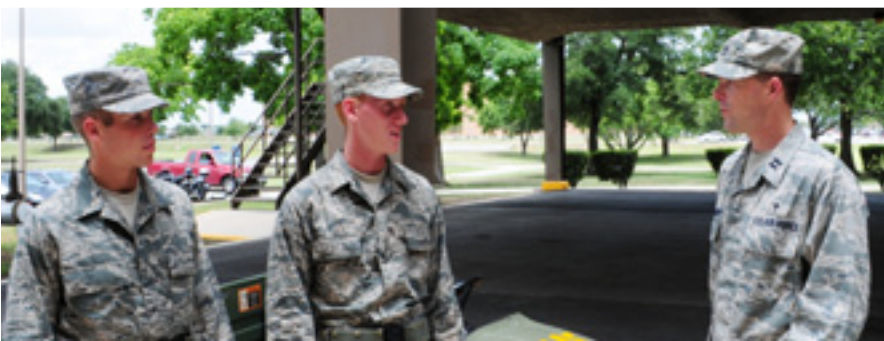
- Stu Kerns,
Zion Church, Lincoln NE



Nebraska Church Planting Being Faithful in the Outward Frontier



Renewal from the Ashes How One Church Building Became Three



Chaplain Chad Montgomery Pastor in the Work Place



Mission to North America
Presbyterian Church in America

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In this Issue of *Multiply*:

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From the Coordinator

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Philippians 3:7-8



DEAR FRIEND,
In this world of instant messaging and high-speed Internet, it's easy to feel discouraged if we don't see immediate results when we share the Gospel. But in Chapter 3 of his letter to the Philippians, Paul urges us to keep going: But... *forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

This issue of *Multiply* features church planting in Nebraska. The Midwest is still a sort of outward frontier for the PCA, but men like Stu Kerns and Eric Olson have been faithful to the call to preach the Gospel and have seen God grow His church in ways they couldn't have imagined. Says Eric, "I believe God has honored our faithfulness in small things and has allowed us to have an effect for Him here."

You'll also read about the work of Chad Montgomery, who serves as a Chaplain in the Air Force. Chad regularly meets with men and women who, far from home, suffer from extreme discouragement and are often dealing with issues such as suicidal thoughts or marital failure. But Chad is able to offer them real solutions to their problems by pointing them to the Cross.

When I look at men and women who, despite setbacks or challenges, continue to press on toward the goal of the call of Christ Jesus, I'm reminded that if we are faithful to continue to give what we can, God will use us to glorify Himself. Please take time today to prayerfully consider how you can support MNA and the efforts of men like Stu, Eric and Chad. We may not always see results instantly, but we know that our God will accomplish His will in His own timing.

In His Name,
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator

Chaplain Chad Montgomery: Pastor in the Workplace



Chaplain Chad Montgomery was a seminary student when the September 11, 2001, attack on the New York World Trade Center occurred. He joined the Air Force and later went on Active Duty. Today he serves at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio TX as chaplain to more than 6,000 basic trainees ranging in age from 18 to the mid-30s, along with more than 560 Drill Instructors. Chaplain Montgomery is one of 132 PCA chaplains serving in all branches of the US military. Here is his firsthand ministry report.



Just imagine:

- > Every month seeing 40-60 counseling cases, including confronting such deep needs as depression, loneliness and life guidance, in which the counseling recipient wants to hear the Scriptures under your guidance.
- > Every week 4,300 people attending worship services in which they hear the Gospel preached.
- > Every week dealing with multiple trainees with suicidal ideations, who then get to hear about the One Who is the Resurrection and the Life.
- > Over the past 3 years, counseling with more than 30 Drill Sergeants who have let down their gruff guard and trusted me to help with their marital failures.
- > Every month baptizing 30-60 trainees who have heard the Gospel and want to be part of the Body of Christ.

As a civilian pastor, I saw my parishioners for a limited amount of time: during services, small groups and events and for counseling. I never got asked to walk around their places of work, hang out in their offices, go on business trips with them, have lunch with their bosses, or attend staff meetings. The Air Force expects me to do all of that and more. It was in leaving my parish and becoming a Chaplain that I got to know in depth the people among whom I now live and work. I am also confronted daily with multiple differing religious beliefs that I could easily avoid as a pastor. I get to be an ambassador every day.

It is my focus on the always relevant Cross of Jesus Christ that keeps me going—Jesus the perfect one died for the imperfect. He drafts (elects) those

who would never have walked into His recruiting station on their own. I can't win souls. Only God can, so I don't exhaust myself with worry about results. Yet, many trainees and sergeants have come forward to share how Christ has changed their lives, whether it be in depositing their sexual relationship only into their marriage account, finally seeing God as the ultimate husband and looking for an earthly husband who loves Christ, or seeing the forgiveness of Christ in abortion recovery, and especially in learning who Christ is.

When I ask trainees if they have a faith background, they often answer with something "Christianish." They then admit that they have no idea what it means to be a Christian. After explaining Eph. 2:8-10, I often hear trainees say, "No one has ever explained it to me prior to this." As one emotional trainee said to me after a Sunday service, "I found God here." Well actually, He found you, showing once again that when you are Christ's troop and child, being lost means you will be found.



Chaplain, Captain Chad Montgomery
PCA

Nebraska Church Planting: Being Faithful in the

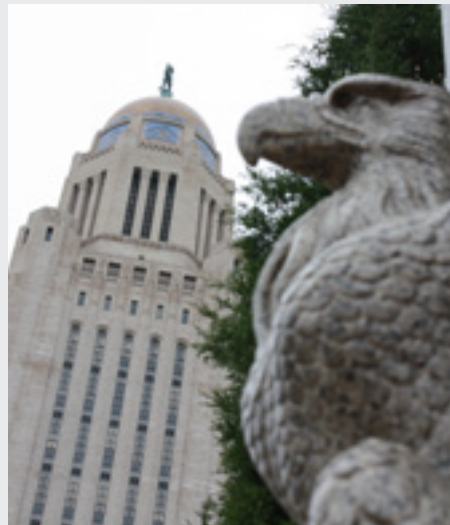


A decade ago, Stu Kerns, pastor of Zion Church in Lincoln NE, and Eric Olson, pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church (GRPC) in Omaha, drove up to seven hours to attend a Presbytery meeting. “In the early 80s, Nebraska was part of the presbytery that included north Texas, if you can imagine that,” laughs Stu. “By the 90s, our Presbytery included Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakotas and Minnesota, but we knew we needed to multiply churches in this state—not only to break down the presbytery, but to see the PCA develop in the Midwest where it’s typically not strong.”

Since then, PCA churches have sprouted slowly but steadily throughout the Cornhusker State. Today, Nebraska shares the Platte Valley Presbytery with Council Bluffs IA; church leaders meet about once a month to pray for and encourage one another and convene three times a year for business. Platte Valley also formed the Great Plains Church Planting Network, which supplies funds for church planting, pays for retreats for church planters and communicates best practices for the region.

Zion, originally called Covenant Presbyterian until taking the name of an older downtown church with which it merged in 1997, became the base of church planting in Nebraska. “Half the population of Nebraska is found in Lincoln and Omaha,” says Stu. “We knew we needed to begin planting in these areas.”

Church planting in Nebraska is different from planting in larger metro areas of the country. Its rural lifestyle—89 percent of its cities have a population smaller than 3,000—boasts close-knit families who have lived in the region for generations. “This impacts how people think of planting churches,” says Stu. “People want



Top Photo: Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln
Bottom Photo: Grace Chapel, Lincoln

to know that you’re committed—that you love the state and its lifestyle.”

That commitment to the state, along with a desire to see people come to Christ and gather in strong, reformed churches throughout the PCA-starved Midwest, is what motivates church planters in Nebraska. In 2000, after a two-year internship with Zion, Midwesterner Mike Hsu launched a second site, Grace Chapel, with about 35 members from Zion. Today, more than 300 people attend. And in June 2008, Tobey Brockman, a New Jersey native who graduated from the University of Nebraska and settled in Lincoln with his Nebraska-born wife, launched a third site, Redeemer. Tobey



Above: Redeemer Church, PCA, Lincoln

My prayer for Lincoln, Nebraska, and the entire Midwest is that the PCA will play a larger and larger role in seeing people come to Christ.

—Stu Kerns

served at Zion for five years before planting Redeemer with around 90 Zion congregants—the church now has about 130 who attend. “Our goal with Nebraska church planting is to grow our churches primarily through reaching new people for Christ,” says Stu.

Platte Valley Presbytery also launched a Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) at the University of Nebraska, led by

Outward Frontier



Above: Pastor Stu Kerns, Zion Church, Lincoln

Bart Moseman, in the fall of 2002. Bart moved on to lead a church plant in St. Paul MN, and in 2008, Steve Allen, who served as Youth Minister for Zion, took over as RUF campus minister. Says Steve, “The public university is the seedbed for culture—launching an RUF was vital to the surrounding church planting. Our role is to mature future Christian



Above: University of Nebraska at Lincoln RUF participants Colin Geldmeier (left); Matt Brittingham; Ashley Hinrichs

leaders to strengthen the church.” Although RUF is not as well known as some other campus ministries, Steve is encouraged to see an average of 50 students attending meetings.

“Many people in Nebraska aren’t familiar with the reformed faith,” says Stu. “But through prayer, faithfulness and hard work, we’ve seen the PCA grow. I used to

drive around Lincoln wondering how we’d get six or seven churches here—now I know it’s a real possibility. My prayer for Lincoln, Nebraska, and the entire Midwest is that the PCA will play a larger and larger role in seeing people come to Christ. I believe God wants to grow churches here. And if we’re faithful, He’ll do it.” ■

RENEWAL FROM THE ASHES

In 2007, Zion Church was planning to expand its historic church building in downtown Lincoln when it caught fire and burned to the ground—the night before the groundbreaking ceremony. God used the tragedy to provide opportunity for growth beyond what Zion could have imagined.

“The outpouring from other PCA churches following the fire was amazing,” says Stu. Using the gift and insurance money they received, Zion was able to purchase an existing church building from another denomination at a very low price. The other church had outgrown their facility and had it on the market for three years; they were eager to sell. The money also provided startup costs to launch their second daughter church, Redeemer, in June 2008. Redeemer found a church right next to the University of Nebraska campus that was ready to close their doors and bought their building for one dollar.

Grace Chapel, Zion’s first daughter church, has a complete church facility that was purchased for just \$60,000. Says Stu, “Many people think you need resources to plant churches—but growing churches doesn’t require resources, it requires faith. I’ve always prayed that our churches will preach the Gospel or be shut down. Our desire is to be more and more faithful with what God has trusted to us.” ■





Above: Gene Leahy Mall, Omaha



Sixty miles northeast of Lincoln in Omaha, Eric prays the same prayer. “In the early 80s, a ruling elder and the founding pastor of Trinity Presbyterian, the only PCA church in Omaha, were flying back from a conference. As they looked over the city of half a million, they realized they needed to pray for more churches,” he says. Trinity has launched two churches since starting with three families in 1980—Harvest Community (PCA) in 1994 and another work in 1999 that is no

longer connected with the denomination. When Eric was called to Trinity as pastor in January 2000, both he and the church, now named Grace Reformed (GRPC), felt the need to continue to plant. By 2004, GRPC had grown to the extent that a second service at its Fort Street location was needed. The church continued to grow and, instead of adding a third service, made the decision to launch a second site in August 2008 in the nearby town of Gretna.

“Gretna made sense for several reasons,” explains Eric. “Randy Arms, our associate pastor, and several of our families at GRPC lived in Gretna. And in about 10 years, Gretna will be the fastest-growing city in the Omaha area. Launching additional sites and churches encourages

We may never see a church of 5,000—but if we can saturate the state with joyful, biblically reformed churches, that’s what matters.

— Eric Olson

growth, since people are more likely to visit a nearby church than drive a long distance.” Today, about 80 congregants attend GRPC Gretna. Eric and Randy each preach at the other site once a month, and twice a year the two churches meet for fellowship.

Earlier this year, Kyle McClellan, a former Baptist minister who transferred into the PCA, contacted GRPC with an interest in growing a PCA work in Fremont, a town of around 25,000. “We had a family at GRPC driving from Fremont, and when Kyle expressed an interest in planting a church, we jumped on it,” says Eric.



Above: Grace Reformed Pastor Eric Olson.

Below: Grace Reformed Associate Pastor Randy Arms with son, Cury Arms, and church session member, Russ Gronewold.



But planting in Nebraska has seen challenges, too. Harvest Community and GRPC had plans to launch another church in the metro-Omaha city of Council Bluffs IA this year when the intern they had called decided to take another call instead. Says Eric, “We still hope to one day begin a work there.”

“Church planting in Nebraska is up and down,” Eric admits. “We like to call ourselves the outward frontier of the PCA. We may never see a church of 5,000—but if we can saturate the state with joyful, biblically reformed churches, that’s what matters.” ■



MNA serves PCA churches and presbyteries as they advance God’s Kingdom in North America by planting, growing, and multiplying biblically healthy churches through the development of intentional evangelism and outreach ministries. For a list of MNA staff, visit our website at www.pca-mna.org. Material in *Multiply* may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to: Fred Marsh, Managing Editor/Photographer. Writing and design provided by Big Bridge, Asheville, NC (thebigbridge.com). *Multiply* is published by MNA.