



Trusting God for a **Great Work** in Lakeland



PLUS: Introducing Paul Hahn as MNA Coordinator

Trusting God for a Great Work in Lakeland



Trinity Presbyterian Church Congregation.

When Tim Rice stepped out with ten families in 1997 to begin Trinity Presbyterian Church in Lakeland FL, he prayed that God would multiply new churches to advance the Gospel. Tim had already served with two churches in Lakeland. He loved people there who loved Jesus, along with the many more who needed to know Him. Tim likes the message of the math, “Even though Lakeland is not all that big, with a metro population of a little more than 270,000, if we plant as many as 30 churches of 500 people each, they still won’t be reaching even 10 percent of the unchurched population. There is an urgent need for healthy, Gospel-believing churches to reproduce themselves in the communities where God has put them.”

From 1997 to 2016 God has graciously kept Trinity and her daughter churches committed to beginning new churches.

1997: Trinity worship services began with the core group of ten families from Covenant Presbyterian in Lakeland, led by Tim Rice as church planter.



Christ Community Church.

2003: Even before the leadership of Trinity had firmed up plans for church planting apprenticeships, Lyle Caswell asked to come aboard. He led in forming Christ Community Presbyterian Church in 2005.



Lyle Caswell (right) with church planter apprentice Jeremy Kemp.

2005: A group of families from Trinity formed Redeemer Presbyterian in Lakeland, meeting on the southwest side of the city. After some challenging early years, Dave

Martin was called to restart the church in 2008. Redeemer is now growing well.



Dave Martin, at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Lakeland FL.

2005: Drew Bennett began an apprenticeship at Trinity. Families from Winter Haven, whose town center is 15 miles from Lakeland’s downtown, attended Trinity worship services. Drew is a life-long resident of Winter Haven. He began to realize the life-changing meaning of the Gospel as he attended worship at Trinity. In 2008, he led in the launch of Redeemer Presbyterian in Winter Haven. Covenant Presbyterian in Winter Haven had experienced a gradual loss of members over the years, and transferred their church property to Redeemer, providing a home base early in the church’s life.



Drew Bennett preaching at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven.

2014: After attending Trinity worship in 2006 as a college student, Ben Turner began outreach in Lakeland’s Parker Street community in 2007. In 2014, he began

“There is an urgent need for healthy, Gospel-believing churches to reproduce themselves in the communities where God has put them.”

~Tim Rice, Trinity Presbyterian Church

Lakeland

leading worship services for Strong Tower in one of Lakeland's most underserved and highest crime rate neighborhoods.



Ben Turner (right) with youth ministry intern Alejandro DeLabastide.

2015: Jeff Skipper became a Trinity second generation apprentice, serving with Drew Bennett in Winter Haven. Jeff now leads a second worship site, Redeemer Southwest, effectively a granddaughter church of Trinity.



Redeemer Presbyterian Southwest Campus, Winter Haven FL.

2016: Josh Floyd has begun a church planting apprenticeship at Trinity, with the goal of planting a church in North Lakeland. Tim explains, "Way back in 1974, at a prayer meeting at our mother church, Covenant, people began to pray that God would raise up someone to plant a church in North Lakeland. In September 1992, at my first meeting with the elders after coming on staff at Covenant, Steve Scuggs (one of Trinity's founders and head of the Lakeland Economic Development Council) presented a case for why a church plant in North Lakeland would be strategic. The elders

discussed the presentation and prayed that God would raise up a church planter. Our hope is that God will confirm His leading and preparation for Josh to lead this work, more than 40 years after Covenant members began praying!"

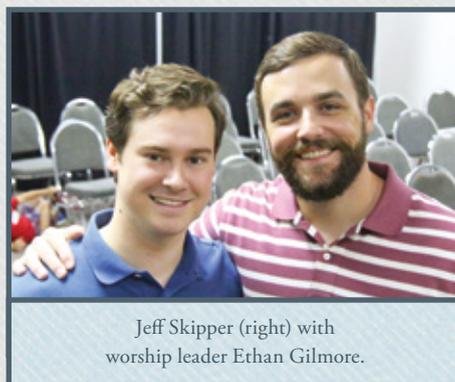
2016: Originally called to the church to lead youth, Jeremy Kemp now serves an apprenticeship with Lyle Caswell, another second generation apprentice, at Christ Community. If God blesses Jeremy to lead in a new church plant, it will be another Trinity granddaughter church.

2016: Trinity Associate Pastor Stan McMahan is exploring whether God is calling him to church planting.

How Do Churches Keep a Strong Focus on Church Planting?

Pray for a vision of the harvest and for church planting. Pray that God will open doors in the community, and that He will lead to the right church planter.

Encourage lay leaders to take the lead in the lay leadership of church planting. Along with the church planter, a healthy new church is led by faithful, hard-working people who love their community and who will love the lost to faith in Christ.



Jeff Skipper (right) with worship leader Ethan Gilmore.

Recruit lay people into training and mentoring to serve as church planters.

Church planting churches invest in training and mentoring of church planters. When Tim began youth ministry at First Presbyterian



Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Church in 1986, he never dreamed he'd end up planting churches. "I would have thought I'd be the last guy to plant a church," he laughs. "I didn't even see the connection between student ministry and church planting. But God does greater things than we could think or imagine." Look for church planters right in your community. Drew Bennett grew up in Winter Haven – and never left. Timo Strawbridge, a Ruling Elder who serves on the Trinity staff, grew up in Lakeland – and never left.

Give yourselves away. This is the Jesus way! Tim's wife Julie sums it up, "We've heard people who say, 'Church planting is harder than I thought it would be.' It is really hard work. But God has called us to a community that needs Jesus. Our community sees the work that goes into it and they really begin



“There’s definitely a sacrifice involved. But when I was worried about leaving friends behind, I found that my friendships only multiplied.”

-Gretchen Sweet, member at Trinity Presbyterian Church

to see Jesus in a whole different way.”

Gretchen Sweet, another Trinity member, agrees, “There’s definitely a sacrifice involved. But when I was worried about leaving friends behind, I found that my friendships only multiplied.”

Trust God to do something different.

Tim emphasizes, “We want the churches who come out of Trinity to be different from us, so that the new church will reach different people.” Though the Parker Street community is just 500 yards from the building where Trinity gathers for worship on Sunday, the two communities are worlds apart in cultural and socioeconomic terms, and each community needs a church.

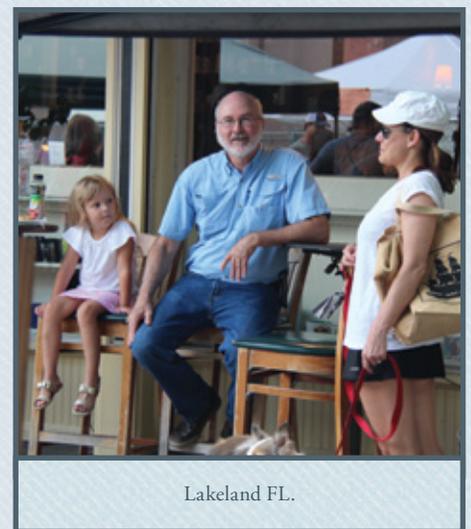


Lakeland FL.

Work with other churches to plant churches.

God’s Spirit advances church planting in Lakeland through the weekly meeting of all church planting pastors for prayer, encouragement, sermon preparation, and personal encouragement.

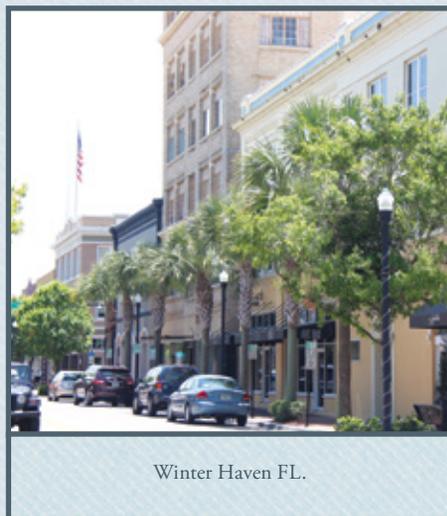
Seek community. The pastors’ wives have offered strong support to one another informally in the past, and now also use the resources of MNA Parakaleo Church Planting Spouses Ministry. In the larger region, the Lakeland churches participate in the Florida Church Planting Network, led by Ruling Elder Ed McDougall. Personal encouragement through friendships is one of the strongest themes of God’s work in Lakeland. Tim Rice recalls that there was a revival among young people in Lakeland in the 1980s, resulting in close friendships that continue today. Timo Strawbridge, Andrew Lamb (Mission to the World and Third Millennium), Ted Strawbridge (Timo’s brother and PCA church planter in Ocala FL), newly elected MNA Coordinator Paul Hahn (Auburn RUF and church planter in Austin TX and Knoxville TN), Jim Valenti (Ruling Elder at Covenant Lakeland),



Lakeland FL.

and Dean Nederveld (Ruling Elder at Trinity Lakeland) – all were touched by this movement of God’s Spirit and remain very close.

Rice sums it up with the question, “Wouldn’t it be great to go to a church that is great to attend?” He explains that a great church is one whose constant focus is the Gospel. “Gospel means Good News, the declaration of God that He will not count our sins against us if we trust in His Son, Jesus, to be our God and Savior. At the same time, however, trusting Christ is not merely some switch we flip and now we’re going to heaven. The Gospel of grace (God’s work on our behalf) is how we grow as Christians. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian church, *As you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in Him* (Colossians 2:6).”



Winter Haven FL.

INTRODUCING PAUL HAHN AS MNA COORDINATOR

In June the PCA 44th General Assembly appointed Paul Hahn as MNA Coordinator, succeeding Jim Bland. Paul formally began his work with MNA in July.



Left to right: Timo Strawbridge, Tim Rice, and Paul Hahn.

Paul and his wife, Fran, are the parents of four adult children: daughters MaryFran (she and her husband, Will Anderson, are expecting their first child close to the end of 2016), Duggan, and Bailey, and son Jim. Fran is from Birmingham AL and grew up under the ministry of Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Paul and Fran met at Cru's 1983 national Christmas conference in Kansas City. Paul was a senior at Yale University and Fran a junior at Auburn University. Out of 18,000 students, they sat down next to each other; Paul still considers himself blessed!

The two married in 1986 and headed off to Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson MS in 1987. Paul was ordained to the Gospel ministry in 1990 as RUF Campus Minister at Auburn University. In 1994 the Hahns headed to Austin TX, with Paul serving as church planting pastor, then senior pastor, for Redeemer Presbyterian Church. In 2003 the Hahns moved to Knoxville TN, where Paul was again church

planter and senior minister for Redeemer Church of Knoxville. In 2015 Paul began a formal role with Tennessee Valley Presbytery in church planting and church renewal initiatives for the presbytery.



Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Knoxville TN.

Paul is a native of Lakeland FL and has been friends with Tim Rice since they both came on staff in 1984 with Athletes in Action, Tim at Florida State University and Paul at the University of Florida. (Interestingly, both planted those works!) Timo Strawbridge, Jim Valenti, and Dean Nederveld – all Ruling Elders mentioned in this issue's Lakeland story – have been Paul's friends and encouragers in the Gospel since high school and college days.

In addition to Paul's broad range of pastoral leadership and church planting experience within the PCA that aligns so well with MNA's mission, the MNA Permanent Committee of the General Assembly highlighted these qualities in nominating Paul to the MNA leadership role:

- A compelling testimony to God's grace in calling him to faith in Christ and into the Gospel ministry; a faithful walk in his personal life and his marriage to Fran, who wholeheartedly supports and encourages him in his call to ministry.
- Relationships across generations within the denomination, from the church fathers through the younger generation.
- Sensitivity to intercultural ministry challenges and opportunities, and a seeking of intercultural ministry in his prior calls.
- A vision for strong future PCA leadership for MNA in the extension of the church through prayer, evangelism, church planting, outreach ministries, and renewal ministries.



Founding leaders of the Southwest Church Planting Network in 1988. Paul Hahn is far right, back row. Jim Bland, just retired as MNA Coordinator, is second from right, front row, beside the network founding director Brad Bradley, far right front.

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.pcamna.org. Material in *Multiply* may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to: Fred Marsh, Managing Editor. Writing and design provided by Big Bridge, Asheville, NC (thebigbridge.com). *Multiply* is published by MNA. [f](https://www.facebook.com/pcamna) [t](https://www.twitter.com/pcamna) Follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/pcamna](https://www.facebook.com/pcamna) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/pcamna](https://www.twitter.com/pcamna)

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INSIDE MULTIPLY SUMMER 2016

- TRUSTING GOD FOR A GREAT WORK IN LAKELAND
CHURCH GROWTH IN LAKELAND & THE SURROUNDING AREA
- INTRODUCING PAUL HAHN AS MNA COORDINATOR

From the Coordinator

“This day is a day of good news.” -II Kings 7:9



I love the Lakeland story that you find inside this issue. I delight in the creative risk for the sake of the Gospel that is here, the embrace of the way of the cross.

Covenant Lakeland risked by planting Trinity Lakeland, just when it seemed that the mother church was flourishing for the first time in years. I know firsthand that

this was hard for everyone involved – hard for those who went out and hard for those who stayed.

Trinity has paid forward Covenant’s step of faith, bringing on and investing in church planting apprentices again and again, planting multiple daughter churches, one of them about five football fields away from their own location! Trinity is continually sending people out in mission, giving leaders, families, and resources away.

And now, those daughter churches are planting churches! Planters and pastors meet together for prayer and to help each other hone effective Gospel preaching. Now, elders and lay leaders are gathering together with their pastors to ask, “How can Polk County FL be renewed by the movement of the Gospel? What would it look like if this was happening?” This is how a church planting ecosystem develops, not just in theory, but in reality.

I especially like this story because it doesn’t take place in a big city or under famous leadership. Ordinary people have been captured by the Gospel of Jesus and have been given over to Him and His mission, people like us. May we go and do likewise! More to come....

Paul Hahn
MNA Coordinator