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Dan MacDonald, Grace Toronto*

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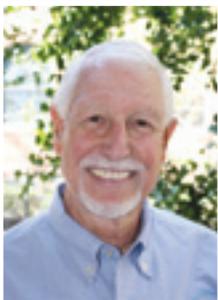
A Vision for Sharing Christ with Canada

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From the Coordinator

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him & saying, "Come over to Macedonia & help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:9-10)



Dear Friend,
One Sunday, Dan MacDonald, pastor of Grace Toronto in Ontario, Canada, was chatting after services with a visiting couple. Young professionals, they admitted they didn't know much about Christianity, but that after years of living in a post-modern culture, they felt they needed to begin looking for answers that made sense.

Says Dan, "The wife told me, 'There's something different here at Grace. I've heard so many negative things about Christianity for so long, I've begun to wonder just what it's really all about.'"

In this issue of Multiply, you'll learn how Grace Toronto is reaching a city for Christ through ministries that engage a largely unchurched

population and offer real answers to people who are grappling with tough questions about faith and life. Each week, anywhere from forty to eighty skeptics join the congregants at Grace—and many are hearing the truth about Christianity for the first time.

The Lord is giving men and women a vision to share the Gospel with the people of Canada. Along with Grace, four other PCA works have been launched in Eastern Canada since 2005. As you read their stories, please consider how you can respond to God's call to share Christ in post-Christian cultures like Canada. And please join me in praying for the men and women who are seizing the opportunities God has given us to proclaim Him throughout North America.

In His Name,
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator



New Growth in Toronto

Within the past seven years, three mission churches have sprung up in the Toronto metro area where before none existed. New City Hamilton, New City Newmarket and New City Toronto are working within the support of the Grace Toronto network of churches to share the love of Christ.



“Our congregation is becoming more of a mixed group,” explains Connan Kublik, pastor of New City in Hamilton, a suburb about an hour southwest of downtown Toronto. “We’re near the heart of downtown Hamilton where many immigrants live, as well as some of the poorest people in the city.” Launched in 2008, New City opens its office as a gallery to serve a growing art community, and mercy ministries support the needs of the disadvantaged. Says Connan, “Neighborhood hubs are already developing around these ministries—it’s a joy to see our congregants building significant, long-term relationships with their neighbors.”

Partnering with two Chinese churches, Brian So launched New City Toronto on Easter Sunday this year. About 30 people, mostly English-speaking Chinese, meet weekly in a small downtown comedy theater, where the intimate setting encourages people to ask questions about the Christian faith. Recently, a man raised his hand in the middle of the service and said he wanted to know more about Christ. “Our congregation prayed for him right then,” says Brian. “The next week, he told me that he has a real faith now.”

“Great opportunities exist here for sharing Christ—if you want to see amazing things happen, come join us in Canada!”
Albert Kooy, New City Newmarket

Fifty-five kilometers (about 34 miles) north of downtown Toronto is the city of Newmarket, a community experiencing a surge of growth. “People are receptive when they see that we’re willing to tackle tough questions,” says pastor Albert Kooy. Five weeks after launching services on Easter Sunday, about 125 people were attending. That is a large number for a new church anywhere in North America, and especially so in Canada. Says Albert, “Great opportunities exist here for sharing Christ—if you want to see amazing things happen, come join us in Canada!”

Redeemer Community Church



Kevin & Jessica Rogers

Fifteen hours by highway to the east of Toronto in Moncton, New Brunswick, Redeemer Community Church, led by Kevin Rogers, meets in a hockey rink for their morning service and at a local farmer’s market for their evening service. The newest church in the Eastern Canada Presbytery, Redeemer has discovered unique opportunities to minister among the city’s large immigrant population. Says Kevin, “It’s challenging to be far from other PCA works, but we’re excited to see what God is accomplishing here.”

Grace Toronto:

A Vision for Sharing Christ with Canada

Toronto, Ontario, offers plenty of opportunities for the good life. The five million residents of the Toronto metro area enjoy an abundance of recreational activities and cultural events, and a sound economy supports strong businesses and good jobs. Thanks to a broad immigration policy, Canada boasts an immigrant population of 49 percent—and Toronto is the most



folks may have attended church, but they aren't sure how to explain what they believe.”

Grace Toronto is one of only four PCA churches in Ontario. Originally launched in the early '90s by Stephen Beck, the church's numbers had dwindled by 2005 after their pastor responded to a call to plant churches in Germany. When Dan and his wife Sue arrived, they decided to replant Grace and immediately began networking with other churches who combined reformed theology with vibrant evangelism and a commitment to see Christ savored and worshipped in every part of the city. In 2006, the church was able to buy a two million dollar building with the help of fellow believers who donated money and offered them no-interest loans. Today 400 people attend Grace,

“Much of the younger generation in Canada has never been to church and many have never held a Bible in their hands.”

Dan MacDonald

ethnically diverse city in the world, with 41 percent of immigrants to Canada settling there. But true to the culture of Canada at large, the vast majority of Torontonians are unchurched. “The religious climate of Toronto is similar to what you'd find in New England or Europe,” explains Dan MacDonald, pastor of Grace Toronto Church, located in the downtown area. “Much of the younger generation has never been to church and many have never held a Bible in their hands. Middle aged and older



A game of Dutch blitz at Grace Toronto Game Night, an event that helps connect newcomers to the church.

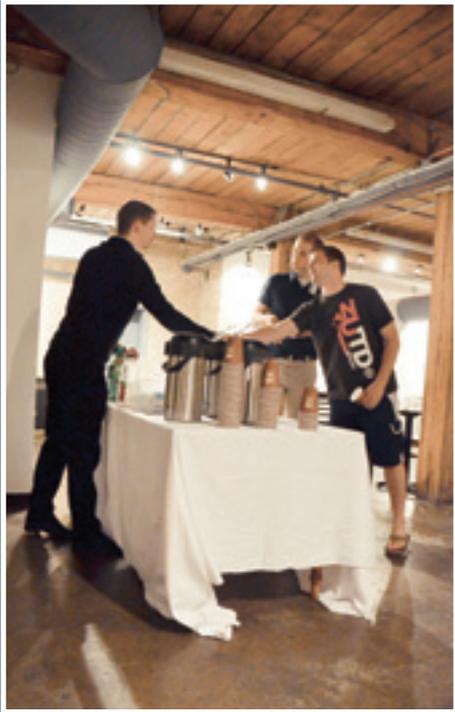


Volunteer Appreciation Night 2011

about 55 percent of whom are non-Anglo, including people from the Caribbean, East Asia, Africa and Malaysia. “The average Christian at Grace feels discouraged in our post-Christian culture,” explains Dan. “But while many Canadians might show disdain for Christianity publicly, they'll privately ask their Christian friends questions about the faith. One of our main goals is to disciple our congregants and give them the tools to share their faith.”

Grace is developing training for congregants to share their faith on different levels. “Our first level of outreach is to teach Christians how to share their faith privately with their friends and co-workers,” explains Dan. The Grace Centre for Urban Missions offers classes and lectures that disciple Christians, equipping them to respond to difficult questions from nonbelievers.

Hope Toronto creates opportunities for congregants to put their knowledge into practice by tying evangelism with mercy and justice initiatives. Congregants are encouraged to invite their unchurched friends to volunteer alongside them in



ministries like Back-to-Back, which provides backpacks of clean clothing, toiletries and other supplies to the homeless. Grace’s Faith and Work connects people with similar vocations and equips them to express their faith with their co-workers, often by eliciting



Brian So and Connan Kublik

hope is that by working together in mercy ministries, conversations about faith between believers and nonbelievers will ensue,” says Dan.

The second level of outreach involves creating “mezzanine” spaces, where Christians and non-Christians gather on neutral ground to learn about and discuss different topics. The Grace Centre for the Arts holds exhibits where Christian and non-Christian artists create works based on a common theme. The church has also launched Grace on Tap, a place where downtown professionals can meet with non-Christian friends for a beer and discussion. Currently, about 40 people meet at Grace on Tap, ten of whom are non-Christian; a second group has recently been formed on the west side of Toronto. “The number of skeptics at Grace has increased to about forty to eighty, mostly due to the connections

we’ve made with people through mezzanine events,” says Dan. “It took a period of time as we kept inviting people to come, but now we’re seeing a response, especially among young people, that even two years ago wasn’t there.”

Finally, Grace offers a more traditional outreach through a Bible study held immediately after worship services each



Albert Kooy answering questions on his ordination exam.

*“We need prayer from our fellow believers in the PCA and we need church planters who are willing to work hard in a post-Christian environment.”
Dan MacDonald*

Grace

Sunday where the basic tenants of the Christian faith are examined through Bible studies such as Christianity Explored. “We have about eight non-Christians currently attending these courses,” notes Dan. To minister among the different people groups in the city, Grace has developed small groups—neighborhood communities placed geographically that meet for prayer and hold events or mercy ministries that are specific to their area. It is hoped that these small groups could one day grow into church plants. “Once you have organic communities where people are meeting, you’re nearly halfway to becoming a church plant anyway!” says Dan. Ministry interns will lead the small groups, giving them the opportunity to test their effectiveness as church planters. But like other ministries, progress in this area is slow. Currently, Grace employs one intern, and they’re the only PCA church in Toronto to have one.



Dan MacDonald thanks volunteers during Volunteer Appreciation Night 2011.

How does a church in a city filled with mostly unchurched people and almost no one with a reformed background find its lay leadership? “You create your own,” laughs Dan. Elders are trained through a formal curriculum of 12 sessions that includes reformed distinctives, evangelism, leadership of small groups and prayer training. “In Toronto, most Christians have only a broad, evangelical Christian background,” explains

Dan. “Elder training takes almost a year because many people haven’t heard of the Westminster Confession of Faith and they might struggle with reformed concepts such as predestination. Many of our elders become reformed in their convictions as they go through training.”

“When we first came to Toronto, mobilizing people was harder than we thought,” remembers Dan. “We’d served in other places where evangelical Christianity and reformed



The Children’s Ministry perform a special song for Easter Sunday 2012.



thinking were more common—we found you have to work for the long haul to minister here. We need prayer from our fellow believers in the PCA and we need church planters who are willing to work hard in a post-Christian environment—who want to embrace Canada as a place to live for a decade or more. The Lord is working here, and He’s allowing us to see a fresh expression of the Gospel. For that we are thankful.”



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