



IN THIS ISSUE:



*Churches Reaching a
Variety of Communities for Christ*



Churches reaching a variety of

We've all spotted them: the people who slip out of a worship service immediately after—or sometimes, even before—its conclusion. Preston Graham, pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) in New Haven CT, approached some such folks to find out why. They didn't feel like they belonged, he learned. In a church built around the Yale University community and led by a pastor with a degree from that institution, less educated and affluent residents didn't think they fit in.



Christ Presbyterian Church in the Hill

"That's when we realized we were expecting people of all communities and cultures to become like us," Graham says. "We decided we had to find another way." CPC had planted separate churches in Providence RI and Danbury CT. In 2009 CPC established its second New Haven congregation in the Hill neighborhood, a low-income community made up largely of Black and Latino residents. In the five years since, CPC Hill Pastor Tolivar Wills says the congregation has seen leadership grow among its members, with those members and



Pastor Wills (right) visits with Eric Ashe and Will S. at E&J's Barber Shop. Wills leads a Bible Study at the shop in honor of Mr. Ashe Sr., now deceased, who led a Bible Study there.

regular attendees playing a significant role in developing the church's youth ministry.

"We want every community in their particular cultural context to be empowered to fully grow and develop in their uniqueness," Wills says. As a result, the worship service and outreach don't look the same as at Christ Presbyterian's main campus. "Church is more than just getting people to the Gospel—it's getting people to live out the Gospel," Graham adds.

CPC isn't alone in this effort to have a presence in several different communities. Christ the King Presbyterian Church (CTK) in Cambridge MA, now led by Pastor Rick Downs, comprised English language and Portuguese language congregations from the church's founding. Establishing congregations in other diverse communities in the Boston metro area was a natural further step. Grace DC in Washington DC has also

taken this route. Each congregation is working to reach out to communities that often represent different racial and socioeconomic makeup than the congregations at their original campuses.

FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Although the neighborhoods these churches work in are being gentrified, many of the residents are impoverished and less educated than those in other communities. A major goal for these churches is to establish congregations in different communities by building up leaders within the communities, rather than bringing in leadership from outside.

"Especially in our community, their national inclination is not to go read and get information from a book," Wills says. It's a markedly different approach from the



Grace Mosaic

academic method the congregation at CPC's main campus often prefers. "They learn more hands-on, in community, by word of mouth. It's messy. But it does work. We're seeing it work."

Being for the neighborhood also means the pastors are inclusive in identifying leaders. "We invite the poor in our midst to participate in our liturgy, to participate

"Church is more than just getting people to the Gospel—it's getting people to live out the Gospel."

-Preston Graham, Christ Presbyterian Church

Communities for Christ



Left to Right: Russ Whitfield, Grace Mosaic; Carolyn Curtis; Duke Kwon, Grace DC Meridian Hill; Glenn Hoburg, Grace DC Founding Pastor. Carolyn Curtis attends Grace Mosaic and has provided leadership in research on PCA African American Church Planting.

in our service in upfront ways,” says Pastor Russ Whitfield of Grace Mosaic, a congregation of Grace DC meeting in a lower income area. “It’s pretty sweet to see people who are noticeably different in our community come in and be not merely tolerated, but loved.”

Overcoming cultural boundaries isn’t new in the church; in fact, Whitfield points out, these struggles have been in place since the Jews wondered how to accept Gentiles into the early church. “Paul sees overcoming cultural and ethnic boundaries as part and parcel of preaching the Gospel and living in its light,” he says.

“We’re trying to identify barriers between people in our cultural context. What



Northeast DC Neighborhood

unique opportunities do we have to display the glory of the Gospel and the power of Jesus to unite people?” Whitfield asks. “It’s something only Jesus does. It’s bringing people together who don’t seem to belong together—the rich and the poor, different ethnic groups.”

The challenge of people taking leadership and responsibility for themselves shows up in every neighborhood. “We try to pay attention to power dynamics in our community,” Whitfield says. “That typically takes the shape of leadership. Who gets to come up and read Scripture? Who gets to



CPC in the Hill Congregation

lead us in prayer? We recognize that values are communicated in the thousand small decisions you make throughout the week and on Sunday morning.”

Sometimes, that means asking more experienced leaders to take a back seat when they come to a new church plant. “The minute we start building it for the people you want to bring, the people of the Hill won’t feel at home,” Wills explains.

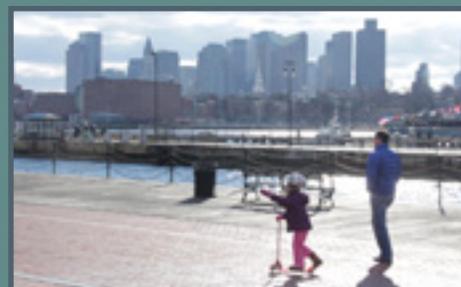
Adapting worship style and building leadership from within takes a lot of work, regardless of who you are. “As with all white guys who pastor PCA churches, I find moving toward diversity and multiethnicity is not easy,” says Logan Keck of CTK’s

Jamaica Plain/Roxbury congregation. Keck lives at the intersection of white, black and Latino communities and strives to get to know people in his neighborhood, ranging from people he meets at the T mass transit stations to the security guard at his local Walgreens.

But the effort is worthwhile, the pastors agree. “When the two come together, what begins to happen is we begin to see our blind spots,” Wills says. For example, a church member from a high-achieving background may become frustrated with a member from a poorer community who is chronically late. It’s a common scenario, Wills says, because those from the disenfranchised community are not always big on details. That can make the achiever aware that he or she is more focused on time than they are on the person, while the impoverished person may come to realize that lateness affects the person with whom they’re meeting.

DEVELOPING CHURCH PRESENCE IN MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES

“One way to think about our approach is that we are one church on Sunday, with various services across the city, in various languages in some cases, various cultural subgroups, various neighborhoods,” explains Bob Sawyer, church planting director at CTK.





These churches are concentrated within cities, rather than suburbs, to meet specific needs. “We started with the conviction that we wanted to focus our ministry on the District proper because there are already lots of good PCA churches in the broader DC metro area,” says Grace DC Senior Pastor Glenn Hoburg. “We thought more than one church could be effective, meaning as we establish more congregations, they could focus on the unique identity of the neighborhoods.”

“Every congregation will have its own pastor,” says Graham, who expects CPC in the next decade to grow into 10 congregations targeting underserved populations. “We’re not going to have many congregations and an itinerant preacher who goes around and preaches to all of them or reaches them by video.”



CTK church planters, front row left to right: Matthew Owens, Bradley Barns, Troy Albee, Bob Sawyer, Jarret Allebach. Back row: David Richter, Logan Keck, Tom Hudson, Bryan Loney, Dan Rogers.

“In greater Boston, a neighborhood approach is much more appropriate for the context than just one or two big churches trying to attract a bunch of people,” Sawyer says. That’s due in part to the urban density; the concentration of people in a single neighborhood, plus the neighborhoods’

“One thing I’m certain of is most people in Boston aren’t looking for a church, and that means most people I’m hoping will come to our church probably won’t unless we personally invest in them.”
-Logan Keck, CTK Jamaica Plain/Roxbury

strong identities, mean there is a place for churches of the same denominations even only a few miles apart. Christ the King has already developed a number of congregations, with Jamaica Plain/Roxbury and Roslindale launched in 2013 and Somerville preparing to begin services in early 2014.

The multicongregational structure helps support that rapid growth: because the new congregations are only additional congregations rather than separate churches, they’re able to share resources and personnel. “Since we already have expertise in many areas and an administrative structure in place, it takes a lot of burden off the church planter,” Sawyer says. “For us in New England, we want our guys to focus on evangelism and on networking and gathering new people.”

SHARING CHRIST IN THE CONTEXT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

That’s the first step for many of these church planters, including CTK Jamaica Plain/



Logan Keck with CTK Jamaica Plain/Roxbury Congregation

Roxbury’s Keck. In preparing to plant the church, Keck joined the small business organization Egelston Square Main Street to build relationships with the business owners, who represent 17 nationalities. The church now works alongside that group in hosting events in the area, where Black, White and Latino neighborhoods intersect with one another.



CPC in the Hill Men’s Bible Study

“One thing I’m certain of is most people in Boston aren’t looking for a church, and that means most people I’m hoping will come to our church probably won’t unless we personally invest in them,” Keck says.

It’s a service-minded attitude, Grace DC’s Hoburg notes. “One of the challenges here is getting people in the mindset: Are you coming here to be part of the city, which means are you committed to knowing it?” says Hoburg, who explains that DC residents often view themselves as being there for a time, not permanently. “Cities are like people. It takes time to get to know them.”



What unique opportunities do we have to display the glory of the Gospel and the power of Jesus to unite people?” -Russ Whitfield, Grace Mosaic

PRACTICAL NEEDS

One way of connecting with the people of the community is addressing specific, practical needs, such as poverty and literacy. At CPC, the church’s Elm City Empowerment Foundation operates as a separate organization that offers counseling, mercy ministries and more. It operates like a mercy cooperative, Graham says, and each of the church’s congregations share in the

work. It’s one of the practical ties that binds the church’s congregations.

Meanwhile, Keck works to bring together the gentrified and lower-income neighborhoods that surround CTK Jamaica Plain/Roxbury. A Christmas tree lighting ceremony, hosted by the business organization Keck is part of, brought out the mayor, local school choirs and neighborhood residents while helping the



Christ the King Jamaica Plain/Roxbury Community Group

church get out its name. CPC in the Hill cleans streets and leaves behind door hangers to tell residents they were there. By serving their neighbors, church members build bridges in the community.

“A lot of my sermon application has to do with challenging the idols that create barriers between people and challenging a lot of the defensiveness that comes up with ways they’ve created pain in the lives of others,” says Grace Mosaic’s Whitfield. We believe the Lord is pulling us together and He’s making something beautiful out of us, much like the multifaceted beauty of a stained-glass window.”



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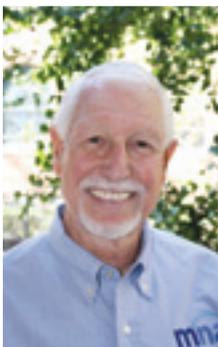
INSIDE MULTIPLY SPRING 2014

CHURCHES REACHING A VARIETY OF
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From the Coordinator

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” — Romans 1:16



Dear Friend,

Neighborhoods all across North America are changing. People, businesses and buildings are not static; they shift, they come and go. But the changes today are unprecedented: instead of ethnic and socioeconomic groups that are very separated, the trend today is metro areas covered with a patchwork of ethnic socioeconomic

groups, along with some very mixed communities, from center city to distant exurbs. The pace of the population shifts is accelerating. This presents new challenges for PCA churches: how do we minister among such diversity in the midst of constant change?

In this issue of *Multiply*, three churches share their experiences planting multiple congregations to minister among new people groups. Christ the King Presbyterian in Cambridge MA, Christ Presbyterian in New Haven CT, and Grace DC in our nation's capital work among lower income communities and communities of diverse ethnic groups, while also serving the affluent and the well educated of these metro areas as well.

Thank you for continuing to pray and support these and other ministries. Your generosity and commitment help spread the Gospel to people throughout all kinds of communities across North America.

In His Name,
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator