

MISSION
TO NORTH
AMERICA

Presbyterian Church in America

Dear Friends:

Christianity is declining in Canada. Many churches have had to close their doors, and, currently, more than 40 percent of residents in Vancouver profess atheism. The Grace Project, profiled in this issue of *Multiply*, is addressing this decline with an advancement of the Gospel. Those involved in the project have observed that many Canadians don't hold misconceptions about Christianity. As one pastor explained: "They simply have no clue who Jesus is."

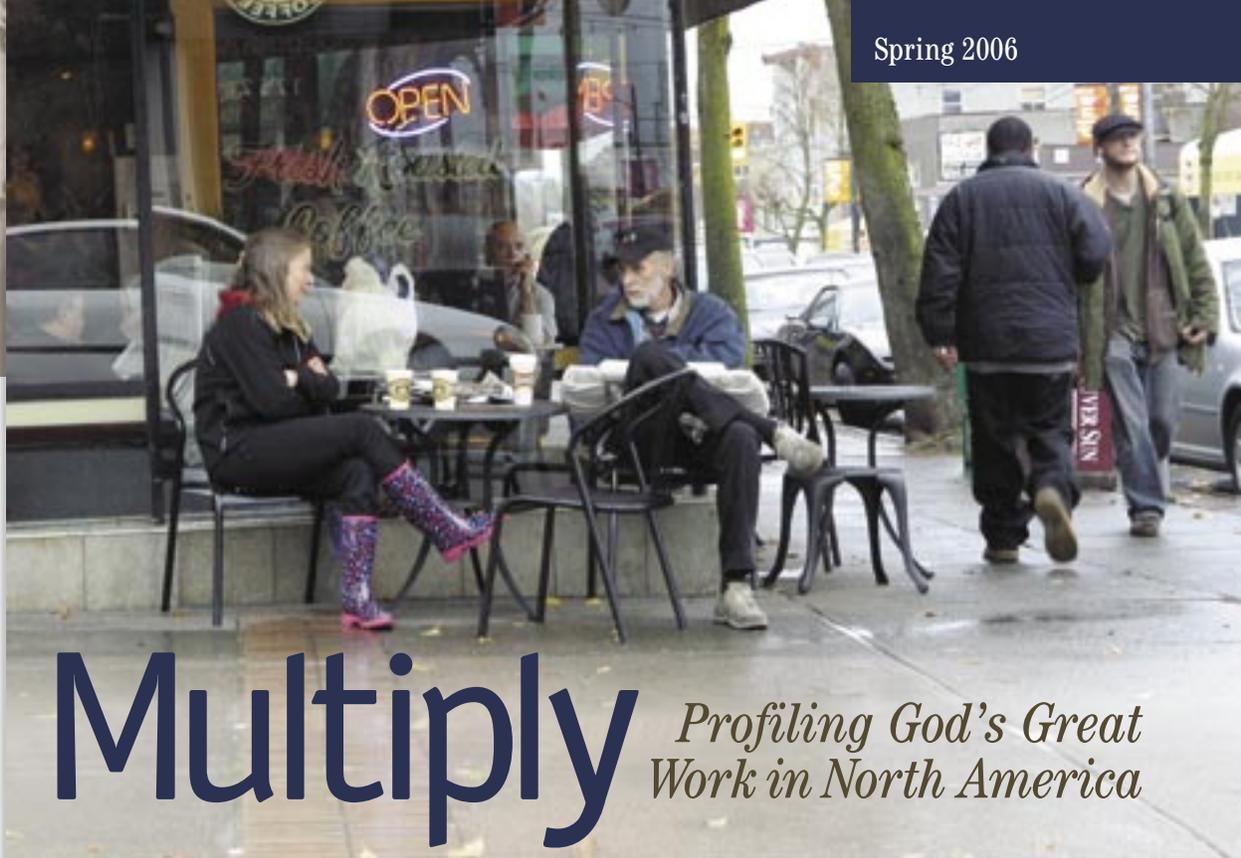
By planting churches, training lay ministry leaders, and developing community outreach programs, The Grace Project is bringing the Savior's love back to the people of Canada. Mission to North America (MNA) is excited to see two new churches under way in Vancouver, as well as a new beginning for Grace Toronto. And as you read this issue, I ask that you consider how you might be a part of this initiative through prayer and financial support. Specifically, I ask you to pray for the Lord to strengthen and equip the pastors and families leading this ministry and that God will provide the financial supporters and church planters to establish many more churches in other areas of the country.

MNA serves PCA churches and presbyteries in their church planting initiatives. In addition, MNA supports English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministries, Mercy Ministries, Leadership and Ministry Preparation (LAMP), Revitalization and Evangelism, Capitol Service, Chaplain Ministries, MNA ShortTerm, and Disaster Response. Please prayerfully consider joining MNA in these efforts as we seek to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout North America.

In Christ,



Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator



Multiply

Profiling God's Great Work in North America

The Grace Project: *The Lord Opens the Way for Gospel Ministry in Canada*

John Smed recalls theologian J.I. Packer describing Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, as the most secular city in North America. John agrees. As the church planter and pastor of Grace Vancouver Westside, John comes face-to-face with this reality every day. ***"The religious climate here is becoming increasingly atheist," he reports. "There has been an unhindered decline in church attendance. In 1950, about 80 percent of Canadians went to church on a weekly basis. Today, it's less than 20 percent."***

The city of Vancouver is geographically divided into distinct communities: north, south, east, and west. "On the west side of the city, residents tend to be more from upper-middle class backgrounds, many young couples and singles, and there is a significant focus on the arts with more than 40 galleries in the area," says Steve Laug, church planter of Grace Vancouver Eastside. "The east side of the city used to be a blue-collar community.

Now, we are seeing more young families moving in. The east also has a rich diversity with about 60 different people groups represented."



Pastor John Smed, left, with his wife, Caron, planted Grace Vancouver

Westside six years ago. Today, the church welcomes 150 to 175 worshippers every Sunday. John reports that the two church plants in Vancouver are growing by approximately 30 to 40 people per year, and of this number, about one-third are new professions of faith.

Beginning services in March 2005, Grace Vancouver Eastside currently meets in a Slavic Baptist Church. Pastor Steve Laug estimates that about 50 to 65 people attend worship services every week. A significant number of these are non-Christians. Some come because their friends invite them, while others attend because of a connection made in the community. Steve says, "They want an explanation – why are we here?"

John and Steve work together as part of The Grace Project, a comprehensive church-based urban ministry movement in Canada, to address the unique needs of each area. Focusing on planting Bible-centered churches, equipping the people of God for ministry, and engaging in community development, The Grace Project also includes Grace Toronto, a mission church led by Pastor Dan MacDonald, the Grace Centre for Urban Mission and Biblical Studies in Vancouver, and several mercy ministry partnerships with local organizations.

(Continued)



“Our vision,” John explains, “is a Canada where the message and ministry of Christ penetrates and transforms the spiritual life, social dignity, and cultural heart of her cities.”

The foundation and direction of The Grace Project rests in prayer.

“We do nothing without prayer,” Steve says. “Prayer is part of the fabric, part of our DNA. It’s the only way to have clarity to view and address the numerous needs.” For Dan, the realization that they weren’t praying enough about the direction of the ministry was a release. “We stopped beating our brains out trying to accomplish this and that and started praying our brains out. And we have seen God move. He is doing it His way.”

What God is doing, according to John, is leading and guiding the ministry team, through prayer, to become the church they are meant to be. “God is using our churches as He designed them – to bring healing and restoration.”

The Grace Project’s mercy ministries are an essential part of this healing. “In the beginning, we started by exploring the different organizations and churches already at work in the community,” relates Steve. “We volunteered with them and were able to see what was missing and what we could do to help fill in the gaps.” John says it was a growth process, “We were getting to know the city and her needs, as well as getting to know ourselves and what we could offer.”

The needs that emerged reached far across the spectrum of social issues. In answer to prayer, God has raised up key urban mission leaders to become involved with ministries to the homeless and low income populations and sexually exploited women and their children.

One of the projects is Showers for the Shelterless, an outreach to the homeless and low income populations in the city. The local community center opens its facilities to allow homeless people to take showers, and volunteers serve breakfast and provide fresh clothing and conversation. “It’s a real big deal for them to get a shower,” explains Teresa Smed, John’s daughter and coordinator of the program. “It impacts how they feel about themselves and how they feel others perceive them.” Started in 2001, the program now serves about 90 people every week at two locations. The ministry has also helped unite the community. More than 40 local businesses have come alongside the project by donating supplies and financial support. In addition, several community centers in other areas are looking to implement similar programs.



Showers for the Shelterless volunteers offer showers and breakfast to homeless and low income men in Vancouver every week. When the temperatures drop below freezing, they also open an Emergency Overnight Shelter. Last year, the team planned for 10 days of extreme weather – but had 22. Teresa Smed, right, coordinates the volunteers from Grace Vancouver, including Betty Lau, left, and Jon Poettcker, center.



Another ministry, Candella Place, in which Grace Vancouver partners with More Than a Roof, provides subsidized housing for low income families. Dallas Michayluk, a ministry intern at Grace Vancouver, manages the program: "About half of our residents are dealing with some form of mental illness, addiction, or disability. We offer them an apartment and help with important life skills such as job training, financial planning, and health safety. We also conduct English classes, Bible studies, and support groups. It's a secure place for them to call home."

Tackling one of Canada's most serious social challenges, *Genesis Vancouver is a para-church ministry reaching out to sexually exploited women, youth, and their children.*

"No little girl ever dreams of becoming a prostitute. Unfortunately, the reality is that more and more women and youth are being trapped in the life of exploitation," says Rod McLain, a ministry intern at Grace Vancouver.



Pastor Dan MacDonald, pictured here with his wife, Sue, felt the Lord calling him to Toronto while he was working at a reformed church in Jacksonville, Florida. "We came into a situation with unique challenges. Grace Toronto was planted 10 years ago, but after some difficult times, it is now in the stages of restarting. We are seeing just how gracious the Lord is through this experience and feel a great sense of His renewing power. We want to honor His calling to this area." Currently, Grace Toronto is hosting two small groups with a total of 30-35 people each week, and Dan hopes to start worship services in the next few months.

"Genesis Vancouver is based on an approach developed by Servants Anonymous to help this population escape a life of degradation and abuse. It's a long-term recovery program that provides the lasting support that is necessary to encourage learning, self-confidence, and new lifestyle patterns both for the women and their children."

In addition to these mercy ministries, the Grace Vancouver churches coordinate community programs and events to connect with their neighbors.

On the west side, Caron Smed, John's wife, organizes Arts in the City/Arts in the Sanctuary, hosting art shows, music concerts, and film showings at different times throughout the year. "It's an atmosphere where Christians and non-Christians can meet over their common love of the arts," she says. On the east side, Anne Weins leads outreach to the international groups in the area, especially students. Host families from the churches welcome students into their homes for the duration of their education in Canada. "The students seem to be greatly impacted by the warmth and love of the families."

Another important aspect of The Grace Project is equipping lay leaders to minister in the communities. The Grace Centre for Urban Mission and Biblical Studies in Vancouver is a church-based training plan offering street level apprenticeship. "Our focus is to build on who the individual is and who God is calling him or her to become," says Steve, who oversees the training. "We do asset-based assessments with each person and develop a learning plan tailored to the person's gifts and skills."

The training center was one of the main draws for Dan and his wife, Sue, to The Grace Project. "The center inspired us," he recalls. *"They are preparing people for ministry in a very much post-Christian society, focusing on integrating faith and work."* Dan hopes to open another center in Toronto, where he says the cultural atmosphere is very different from Vancouver.

At Candella Place, a subsidized housing complex, residents receive support during challenging times in their lives. Dallas Michayluk, coordinator of the program, knows first-hand what that support means: "Years ago, a car accident left me unable to work. Low-income housing gave my family the opportunity to get back on our feet. I've experienced the many benefits and rich blessings that come from the stability of this type of program during those difficult trials."

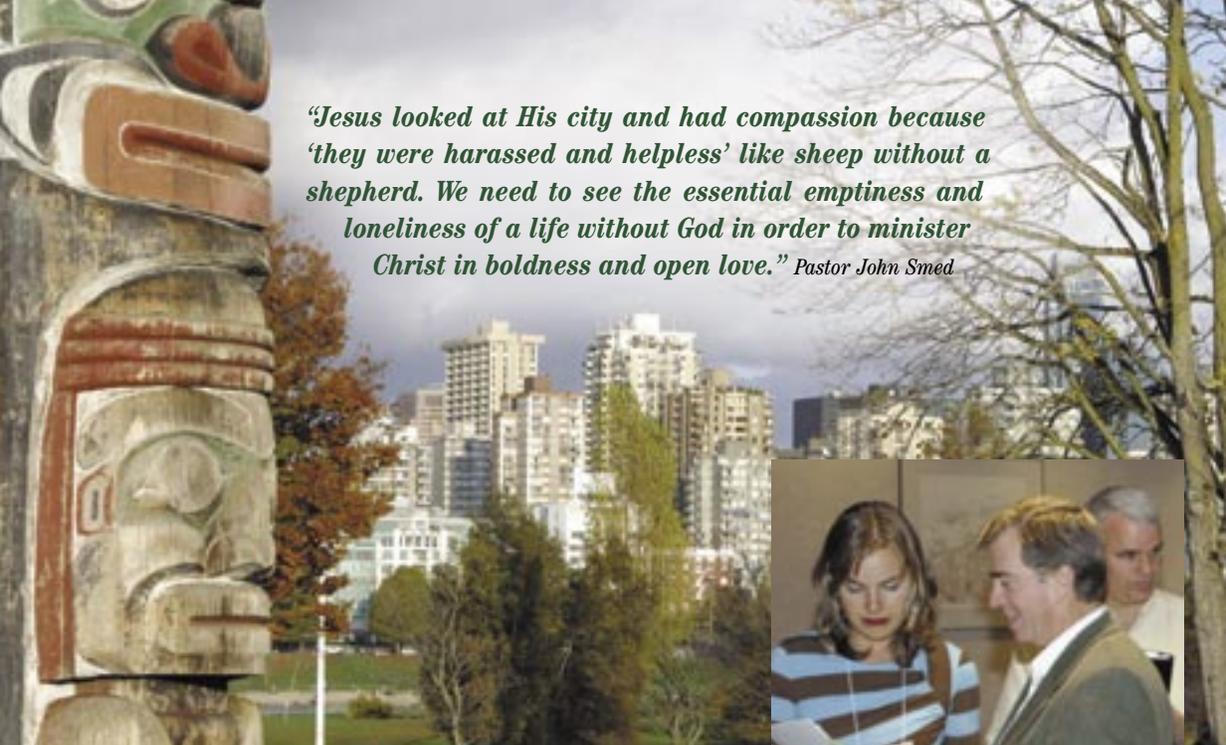


The diversity of Vancouver brings a rich cultural mix to the Grace Vancouver churches. Steve Laug reports that the church reflects the demographics of the area. "There is a strong influence from the Eastern religions, but we are seeing that there is a growing willingness to try new things. It's important for us to reach out to the ethnic communities."

For more information on The Grace Project and other PCA initiatives across North America, visit www.pca-mna.org.



“Jesus looked at His city and had compassion because they were harassed and helpless’ like sheep without a shepherd. We need to see the essential emptiness and loneliness of a life without God in order to minister Christ in boldness and open love.” Pastor John Smed



Caron Smed describes Vancouver as “a vibrant city of many colors.” With the influence of the arts in the city felt far and wide, Caron drew on her own deep-rooted interest in art to develop relationships with her neighbors. “We started Arts in the City/Arts in the Sanctuary in 2000 with the idea of it being a place where art lovers could meet and mingle in a safe, welcoming environment.”

“Toronto is much more like New York City than Vancouver,” he says. “It’s the business center. The people are very focused on their work and spend long hours in the office. They are very driven and materialistic.” Dan has found that there are very few Bible-believing Christians in the city and the overall view is that Christianity isn’t tolerant. “But as we are building relationships and becoming more a part of the community, we’re finding that they aren’t as skeptical as we thought and that some people have a level of church background. We can see that there is hope in Toronto.”

John says that the most fulfilling part of the ministry in Canada is seeing Christ at work saving and changing lives, within the church and the community. “Conversions of the lost are only slightly more satisfying than seeing God’s people burning with new passion and resolve to follow Christ into the field of missions.”

With the two church plants in Vancouver, and Grace Toronto, The Grace Project is planning to start new missions in surrounding cities as the Lord leads. Pastor Evan Bottomley is heading up Vision Canada 2020, coaching, training, and recruiting church planters to spread the Gospel throughout the country. In addition, there are two PCA churches already established in the city and the surrounding area ministering alongside The Grace Project. Faith Reformed Presbyterian is in Vancouver and Christ the King Presbyterian is in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver.

John believes that the church has been sold short of its potential for outreach. “The church has enormous capacity for ministry. There are no limits. God has made it that way. We have seen that with several projects. ***We are becoming a stronger church – with solid foundations and sturdy walls, but with lots of doors and lots of windows which are open to the city and its need. And we are the kind of church God is building His Kingdom through.***”

The Grace Centre for Urban Mission and Biblical Studies in Vancouver provides learning communities for both lay and pastoral leaders to more fully develop the gifts and skills the Lord has given each individual for ministry. The center’s training aims to grow the individual as a spiritual leader and to equip him or her to reach the city with clear vision, intense passion, and personal mission. Steve Laug (clockwise from upper left), coordinator of the center, shares a moment with students Dallas Michayluk, Jed Dorsey, and Wes Wong.



Pastor Evan Bottomley, pictured with Grace Vancouver Westside member Monica Krake at the Grace Summit meeting, is working to build relationships in communities throughout Canada to identify future areas for church planting. Currently, in addition to Vancouver and Toronto, The Grace Project is actively seeking ministry opportunities in Calgary and Edmonton.

Upcoming Conferences:

From Embers to a Flame, Mar. 8-10, at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

Stay connected with the latest ministry news from MNA at www.pca-mna.org.

There, you will find updates on hurricane relief efforts through **Disaster Response** and **MNA ShortTerm**. You can also access the **50 Days of Prayer Devotional for General Assembly**, as well as sign up for **MNA Online**, a new monthly e-newsletter updating you on the various MNA ministries.

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 English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministries, Mercy Ministries, Leadership and Ministry Preparation (LAMP), Revitalization and Evangelism, Capitol Service, Chaplain Ministries, MNA ShortTerm, and Disaster Response for the PCA in North America.

For a list of MNA staff, visit our Web site: www.pca-mna.org.

Material in *Multiply* may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to: Fred Marsh, Managing Editor/Photographer. Design: Studio Supplee. Writer: Michele Harold.

Multiply is published by:

MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA
Presbyterian Church in America
 1700 North Brown Rd.
 Suite 101
 Lawrenceville, GA 30043
 Phone: 678-825-1200
 Fax: 678-825-1201
 Email: mna@pcanet.org
www.pca-mna.org

