

MISSION TO NORTH AMERICA

Presbyterian Church in America



Multiply *Profiling God's Great Work in North America*

Dear Friends:

In the 2000 US Census, our country's population was estimated at 275 million people. Of those, approximately 30 percent belonged to an ethnic minority group. The numbers speak for themselves. Our population is becoming more and more diverse each and every day. For Christians, this has a significance well beyond just seeing the changing picture of our neighborhoods: it opens up nearly unlimited opportunities for fruitful Gospel ministry.



This issue of Multiply focuses on three churches working to minister among the diverse of their communities. It's not easy. But as you'll read, key lay leaders and church staff started their outreach with the basics: prayer and building relationships. The Lord is placing us in these opportunities to share Christ with our changing population. This is a unique time, not just for us as individual believers, but also for the Presbyterian Church in American (PCA) as a denomination to further God's Kingdom among the nations without having to travel anywhere. As you read this newsletter, please prayerfully consider how the Lord might be calling you to become a part of cross-cultural ministry in your community.

Mission to North America (MNA) serves the churches and presbyteries of the PCA in Church Planting, English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministries, Mercy Ministries, Leadership and Ministry Preparation (LAMP), Church Renewal, Ministry to State, and MNA ShortTerm Missions and Disaster Response. Your generous financial and prayer support provide the resources for MNA to minister in this way. Will you join us in Gospel outreach to the many people groups that make up North America?

In Christ,

 Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator

Ministering in Christ: Churches Build a Solid Foundation through Prayer and Relationships

Armed with a soccer ball and a strong faith, Joe Slater and several of the youth from Covenant Presbyterian set out to answer God's call to minister among the Hispanic people in Harrisonburg, Virginia. "There was a trailer park across the street from our church that was about 95 percent Hispanic," recalls Joe, who was serving as Covenant's youth pastor at the time. "We started to notice that the kids would just hang out in the play area, so some of our kids and I decided to take a soccer ball over there and play with them." Joe admits that it was awkward at first, but they continued to go every Wednesday afternoon, rain or shine. "We would see anywhere from 5 to 15 kids each week. After a few months, we asked if we could share a Bible lesson with them. Sometimes I would lead the lesson and sometimes the youth from our church would lead or share testimonies. Soon after that we moved the lessons up to the church building."

What grew out of a simple soccer game was a fruitful outreach effort to the growing Hispanic population in the area, which now includes an after school program with tutoring and a Bible club started by the women in the church, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, Bible studies, and a Spanish worship service. Joe points out the two things that led to the success of this ministry – prayer and relationships. "In the beginning, we went on prayer walks through the mobile home community, which allowed us to get a sense of what life was like for the people. *We knew we needed to do some kind of ministry, but it's hard to know where to start. So we just went in without a plan and loved them.*"

Joe also says that the commitment from Covenant lay leaders and members to reach this specific people group fueled the ministry. "Even before we started the sports outreach to the kids, our church had been sending short-term mission teams to Mexico. Over the years, around 200 people have been on a trip. That exposure really gave people a heart for Hispanic people." *(Continued)*



Most of the kids living in the trailer park were born in the US, but there are always a few who have only been in the US for a short time. Joe Slater says that learning about the background these children have come from has shown him a simplicity of faith. "Many of these kids and families are coming from nothing, but their incredible faith would put many of us to shame."





Sandy Hernandez describes the Ledesma family as an amazing testimony of God's greatness. "This family came to know Christ through the kids coming to the after school program at Covenant. Now they are volunteering with the after school program to help others with their school work, and also to share the love of Christ." From left, Miguel, Jeorgina, Jorge, Esther, Manuel, and Marlana. Esther is helping with translation on a future missions trip to Mexico City. Some of the other Hispanic church members have served in relief work in the Gulf.

The ESL classes at Harvester are held on Sunday morning to encourage students to attend worship. Worship is offered in both Spanish and Chinese. "From the beginning of classes, we let the students know that what we offer is more than just English classes," explains Susan Bossom. "We let them know that we are working through and for Jesus." Susan says that the students feel a great sense of comfort and safety. "We've had a group of Muslims that are willing to walk into church on Sunday in order to learn English. That's the work of Christ."



time continuing to build relationships and ministry efforts with the Hispanic population, and the second is to lead Covenant members to minister to this people group. "We had already witnessed the commitment of the church for Hispanics over 14 years with the mission teams," says Jacinto. "It was very meaningful for me to come here to be a part of this because they were already so involved."

When Jacinto and Sandy first arrived at Covenant, Sandy was encouraged by the church's emphasis on using the gifts of the congregation to further the efforts. "It wasn't about us going in and taking over," she says. "The church leaders really wanted the congregation to continue to be the core of the ministry."

Reaching different ethnic groups with the Gospel, as Covenant is doing, is a growing need throughout the US and Canada. ***In Springfield, Virginia, Harvester Presbyterian is surrounded by the nations. "We're a suburb of Washington, DC, which is very diversified," explains Pastor Ron Bossom. "It's***



hard to go into any community and not find people from all over the world."

Like Covenant, Ron says that Harvester's ministry to the many people groups in their community has been fueled by short-term missions trips. "We've worked in places such as Honduras, Laos, China, Ecuador, Belize, and Mexico. These trips open up a whole new dimension for individuals. They go into these countries and meet people

who are in vulnerable states, offering counseling and teaching about the Gospel. When they come back from the trips, they are ready and eager to reach out in their own neighborhood."

Ron's wife, Susan, has seen that eagerness at work in the church's ESL program. "We've got a good number of church members involved in ESL," she reports. "And not everyone teaches. We really try to focus on the particular gifts God has given each volunteer and we figure out where they are most helpful." Bev Froberg is director of the ESL program. "One of the neat things about our teachers is that for several of them English is not their first language," she says. "So they can relate to what the students are experiencing learning a new language." Each person is crucial to the success of the ministry.

For Ron, church planting has been a big part of his service to the Lord. "I've been involved in more than 50 church plants over my years in ministry, but I always thought I would plant typical PCA churches. Outreach to internationals was far from my mind. But I realized that this is the more important thing ... to see beyond Caucasians and see the others around us."

As the Hispanic ministry grew, those involved continued to pray for the Lord's guidance on the next steps. At the same time, Jacinto and Sandy Hernandez were also praying for God to lead them to the next step in their lives. Jacinto and Sandy were serving at a Presbyterian church in Mexico City – the same church that had received many of Covenant's short-term missions teams.

The Lord led the couple and their family to Covenant, where Jacinto now serves as the pastor for Hispanic Ministries. In this role, Jacinto concentrates his work on two main areas. One is to spend



Before Jacinto and Sandy Hernandez (pictured left and center) came to Covenant, Karen Miller (pictured on right) started a pilot project to offer tutoring to the growing Hispanic population in Harrisonburg. Four and a half years later, that project has become the after school program, which utilizes the help of more than 80 volunteers. Sandy says that it is Karen's love of the kids that has made this outreach so successful.

In 1999, Harvester helped begin a daughter church of the Chinese Christian Church of Virginia in Springfield. Today it has 80 members. In Munson Hill, Virginia, the mother Chinese Church has become the largest Chinese church in the area. "But," Ron adds, "as the Munson Hill area has grown, so too has the diversity among its population. The community is no longer predominantly Chinese. Now, there are more Hispanics, Muslims, and Vietnamese."

As the Munson Hill neighborhood changed, the church knew they needed to adjust their approach to ministry. Ron used his experience to work with Chinese church leaders and members to give a vision for reaching the new community. The Munson Hill congregation started a mercy ministry and quickly grew a heart for Hispanics. "Now, the Chinese are ministering to the Hispanics," says Ron. "And other churches are seeing this. They're asking, 'Who is around us?'"

Currently, Ron is assisting other PCA churches to answer this question and training and mentoring individuals to minister to internationals. He emphasizes that the Lord gifts both men and women to meet ministry needs. "My goal is to help each person develop opportunities for serving based on their individual gifts."

In yet another city with a strong PCA presence, the mostly Anglo congregation at Redeemer Church in Jackson, Mississippi, serves in a predominately African American community.

"We were first all a part of Trinity Presbyterian," explains Steve Lanier, assistant to the pastor at Redeemer. "As part of Trinity, we began building relationships with the community through local programs, such as the YMCA. We invited the neighborhood kids to Vacation Bible School. We went on prayer



Above: Harvester Presbyterian has approximately 200 church members. Ron Bossom (pictured second from left) says that it's the commitment from these members that fuels the church's ministries to the community. Also pictured above, Susan Bossom (left) and Priscilla and Larry Pratt, an elder at the church. The Pratts are key leaders of Harvester's outreach to Hispanics.

Left: The beginnings of Harvester's ESL program started with one church member putting a sign out in front of the church offering free classes. Bev Froberg, pictured on left with Olga Ulloa, says the program quickly grew from there. Today, there are five levels of classes.

Steps to Begin New Ministries:

- 1 Pray for hearts of love for our neighbors and for God's leading.
- 2 Encourage lay people to initiate outreach, supported by pastors and staff.
- 3 Through loving our neighbors and forming relationships with them, begin to discover their needs.
- 4 Develop Word and Deed ministries: tutoring children, ESL, VBS, and adult Bible studies are good ways to begin.
- 5 When the work has grown sufficiently, call staff members or church planters to lead the work.
- 6 Continue to increase lay involvement, in addition to mentoring church planters and pastors.

walks throughout the community and held special events for the community. ***We did things to try to bridge the gap between our church and the community, and God was faithful.***"

Eventually, Trinity needed a bigger facility to meet the needs of the growing congregation, and another church in the community offered them a deal they could not pass up. ***For about seven years, we had really focused and developed relationships with the people in our community, and we were seeing results,***" says Steve. "So when the session chose to move Trinity to a different area, a number of us asked if we could plant a church in the existing facility to continue to keep a reformed presence in the community." (Continued)



Steve Lanier, pictured with wife Sherry, describes the "Sister Cooks" ministry at Redeemer, an outreach effort of women to young girls, as "powerful." Twice a month, young girls, pre-teen and teenage, are invited to the church to learn from the older women in the congregation life skills based on biblical principles. "They learn to cook and to sew as well as learn about purity of heart, body, and relationships."

At Harvester, Bev Froberg estimates that there are between 17-25 different nationalities represented in the ESL classes. Rosalie Menye, second from left, first taught English in her native Cameroon and, today, is one of the teachers in the church's ESL program. Also pictured are her daughters, left to right, Daphne, Madeleine and Jeannette.





When Mike Campbell was called to be the pastor at Redeemer, he was one of only 26 African American pastors in the PCA. Since then, the number has grown, but the number of opportunities for African American pastors and church planters to serve in the PCA has grown at an even faster pace. Mike has experienced firsthand the value of a growing multi-ethnic church in a city whose population is changing in ways similar to changes occurring all across North America.

About 100 people from Trinity stayed to plant Redeemer, with support from Mississippi Valley Presbytery. When it came time to begin a pastor search, the people of Redeemer felt, based on the demographics of the community and the long-term vision of the church to grow into a multi-ethnic congregation, it was most appropriate to call an African American pastor to lead.

"We had very specific things we were looking for, in addition to the individual being African American," Steve remembers. "We prayed and prayed, and we sought and interviewed, and the Lord sent us Mike Campbell."

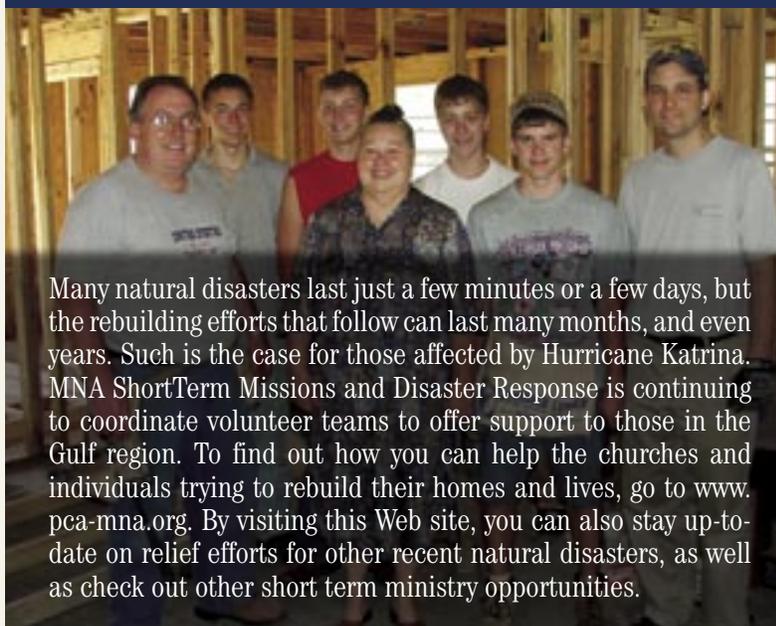
Mike saw the opportunity to be a part of furthering the Lord's Kingdom in a multi-ethnic community with a significant racial history and accepted the call. "It's easier for people to be around others like themselves," he says.

"But the Kingdom is multi-ethnic. ***This ministry at Redeemer isn't just about reconciling black and white, but reaching further to all the ethnic groups in our community.***"

Steve reflects on what this multi-ethnic ministry has meant to his personal perspective: "I am learning how we all default to culture instead of Christ. I find myself having to think through my responses to people and to issues that arise in the church to see if I am thinking of the other person's perspective, because they represent a different cultural perspective than my own."

Sandy doesn't deny that reaching out to other ethnic groups is hard. She says, "It's the fear of the unknown, of not being accepted. You're going into a very different environment and way out of your comfort zone." That's why Sandy stresses beginning everything with prayer. "It helps you to become more dependent on Him." ■

MNA ShortTerm Missions and Disaster Response Needs You



Many natural disasters last just a few minutes or a few days, but the rebuilding efforts that follow can last many months, and even years. Such is the case for those affected by Hurricane Katrina. MNA ShortTerm Missions and Disaster Response is continuing to coordinate volunteer teams to offer support to those in the Gulf region. To find out how you can help the churches and individuals trying to rebuild their homes and lives, go to www.pca-mna.org. By visiting this Web site, you can also stay up-to-date on relief efforts for other recent natural disasters, as well as check out other short term ministry opportunities.

MNA MINISTRY LINK

UPCOMING 2007 CONFERENCES:

The **35th PCA General Assembly** meets June 11-15 in Memphis, Tennessee.

Bethlehem Baptist Church is hosting the **North America Church Planting Seminar** in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 23-27.

The **Network of Portuguese Speaking Churches Gathering** is scheduled for August 31-September 3 in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

The **Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) Conference** will meet October 10-14 in St. Louis, Missouri.

The **MNA Church Renewal Conference** meets October 16-18 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Check out the MNA ministry resources available to you and stay connected with the latest ministry news from MNA by visiting www.pca-mna.org.

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

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