

# Multiply • Summer 09



Mission to North America  
Presbyterian Church in America



## In this issue...

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“As a layperson, it was important for me to see that planting a church was really about sharing that Christ came into the world to save sinners—that we are always a mission church.”

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~ Tony Phelps, *Christ Our Hope in Wakefield RI*



## Every Church Plant a Church

Planting in Providence RI



Branching Out in Houston TX



Sowing Seeds in Lakeland FL



## HOW CAN **MY CHURCH** ANSWER GOD'S CALL TO **PLANT CHURCHES?**

Where do I begin?

Is church planting worth the sacrifices it requires?

How do I make church planting part of the DNA of my church?

How do I develop the leadership and other resources to get the job done?



### *MNA's Every Church Plant a Church DVD*

will help you begin to address your questions through taking these steps:

- 1 Pray for a vision for the harvest, for God's provision of church planters, and for a vision for church planting in your church.
- 2 Build outreach and ongoing church planting into the culture, the DNA, of your church.
- 3 Focus on lay leadership: encourage and mentor lay leaders to take the lead in church planting.
- 4 Recruit and mentor church planters.
- 5 Develop the ongoing vision for churches who plant churches.

**You will find a link to the video at:**

<http://www.pca-mna.org/communications.php> as well as a link to the *MNA Church Planter Recruiting Guide*, a web-based supplement to the DVD. This guide will take you through the basics of church planter recruiting. Included are handouts you may use for presenting the church planting vision to your congregation and to those who might consider God's call to church planting.

You may also order a copy of the DVD.

Go to <http://www.pca-mna.org/communications.php> and click on Request Information.

**Can God advance the Gospel through the PCA among the ever-growing variety of people groups in North America?**

- The North American culture is rapidly and constantly changing.
- PCA churches are learning that God's Spirit does open up the way.
- Through PCA churches, the Gospel is advancing among the growing numbers of people groups in North America.
- What approaches have we seen that God seems most often to bless?

***MNA's Ministering Among the Changing Cultures of North America DVD* will help you begin to address your questions through taking these steps:**

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 encouraging church planters and pastors.

You will find a link to the video at <http://www.pca-mna.org/communications.php>. You will also find a link to the companion booklet *Ministering Among the Changing Cultures of North America*, which is available online as a PDF as well as in printed booklet form. To order a copy of the DVD or a print copy of the booklet, go to <http://www.pca-mna.org/communications.php> and click on Request Information.





# Every Church Plant a Church



Left to Right: Front: David Sherwood and Yaa Serwah Frimpong Back: Nathaniel Koliyah and Carolyn Oh

## Planting in Providence RI



It's Saturday morning. College students sit side-by-side with the children of Liberian immigrants, reading with them, working on spelling and solving math problems. Along with bridging educational gaps for the youngsters, families at Trinity in Providence RI have also developed other community ministries, including additional ministry among the Liberian immigrant families in the area. Church members have provided food and clothing and have met them at the airport upon their arrival in America. During the summer, the church hosts a VBS and Kids' Bible Club with 50-60 children coming each week. Small shepherding groups composed of a variety of members meet once a week.

Trinity was launched in 1997 in downtown Providence by Mel Sensenig, who was then on the staff of Christ Presbyterian in New Haven CT. Families from Berea Presbyterian, a PCA church in the East Providence suburbs that had been dissolved, joined with the core group of Trinity. Soon some Liberians began attending and the church began to grow in its multi-ethnic outreach. In 2001 Grace Covenant Campus Church,

a Korean student church meeting on the Brown University campus with whom Trinity had developed relationships over the years, decided to join Trinity. This became the nucleus for a Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) chapter at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. This further broadened the church's multi-ethnic mix—making for a group of people with different economic, educational and ethnic backgrounds. In the meantime, in 2004 Trinity Providence launched Christ Our Hope in the nearby town of Wakefield, led by Tony Phelps. Mel then moved on to plant a church in Reading PA. David Sherwood is now senior pastor of Trinity Providence and has worked diligently to support Tony's plant and move forward the church planting and campus ministry at Trinity, with another church plant now in the works.

Many churches are hesitant to launch church plants, believing they are too small, they lack sufficient funding or that their members lack the necessary skills. But there are practical steps any church can take to plant Gospel driven churches who plant churches, even among different people groups. Prayer is the starting point, prayer for church planting, led by church leadership and a regular practice for lay people. Next, outreach and ongoing church planting

*Brown University, Providence RI*



*"Planting a church makes you stretch yourself," says Nancy Kjellman, a Trinity member who with her husband Paul also had served in the Berea core group. "But we're showing our children how to serve God. Our kids have fond memories of helping set up for church." Says Paul, "To trust God for all things—we have to pray a lot. Many churches feel they can't give up the resources they have. But the church is about the opportunity to see God at work."*

should be built into the culture of the mother church.

Investing in the development of lay leaders is essential in planting churches, with everyone understanding and embracing the call to plant a church. Preparing church planters by bringing them into an apprenticeship is another crucial step. Finally, the mother church develops plans and recruits a core group of lay people, with a special focus on its leadership, who will build relationships with different people groups of their community. Each of these steps continues building on the original foundation of constant prayer.

Trinity Providence is not a mega church—anywhere from 165 to 180 people attend each week, many of whom are students—but "church planting was in its DNA from the beginning," says David. "We're always thinking of ways to encourage a church planting mindset." Many families pitched in to help with the day-to-day operations of the launch. To supply funding, Trinity made church planting a part of their capital campaign that



Trinity Presbyterian Church in Providence RI

**“To take hold of New England for Christ requires church planting.”**

*~ Tony Phelps, Christ Our Hope, Wakefield RI*

raised money for its own building and to launch an RUF.

As Trinity Providence prepared to plant Christ Our Hope, Tony Phelps, who originally joined Trinity as a layman and later attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, completed an apprenticeship and was recommended for church planting by MNA’s church planter assessment. Tony’s leadership at Christ Our Hope is strengthened by his being native to the area and knowing the culture. “As a layperson,” says Tony, “it was important for me to see that planting a church was really about sharing that Christ came into the world to save sinners—that we are always a mission church.”

And Trinity Providence has plans to help with the planting of another church. “Trinity is helping contribute to the



Right: Tony Phelps, with Christ Our Hope members



Living in the midst of Houston’s young Hispanic families, Oaklawn focuses on outreach among children and youth.

funding and the search for a pastor for the next church, which will probably be in the Rhode Island area,” says Rob Cox, former associate pastor. “The Presbytery here was formed in 2000 with eight member churches. Now there are eighteen—that shows we’ve been able to do a lot with few resources. To give you a good idea of the culture here, the African countries of Uganda or Kenya have far more active evangelical Christians in proportion to its population than Rhode Island, yet the PCA gives almost no resources for church planting in Rhode Island because it is not seen as a mission field. New England is a mission field—a place of great opportunity for the Gospel.”

### Branching Out in Houston TX

In the last 35 years, the Hispanic population in the city of Houston TX has increased from nearly ten percent to over thirty-eight percent—more than either Anglos or African Americans. Most of the 800,000 Hispanics in Houston live within a 15-mile radius of Oaklawn Presbyterian, which began as an Aglo congregation over 100 years ago. In the late 1970s, as Anglos moved to the suburbs and more Hispanics moved to the city, the church called bilingual pastor David Moran, who led the church in becoming a bilingual, predominately Hispanic congregation. David was followed by Alex Villasana, a native of Mexico. Today, Oaklawn is the only Spanish language PCA church in Houston. Its current pastor, Tim Stiemann, a bilingual Anglo, and his

wife, Olguita, who is Venezuelan, have continued to lead the church in its ministry among Hispanics.

“The leaders who were here before me were able to assess areas around us with the greatest need, areas full of the unchurched,” says Tim. That insight led to the launch of Covenant Presbyterian in the early 70s, which has since launched a granddaughter church. In the early 2000s, under the leadership of Alex Villasana, Oaklawn began to pray for God’s guidance in launching a multicultural church in the suburbs of Houston. A core group of families, led by ruling elders Roger Rodriguez and Dave Hernandez, launched Hosanna in 2004, in Tomball TX. With a weekly attendance of only about 50-60 people, Oaklawn envisions planting additional Hispanic, bilingual churches in the Houston area.

**“We cannot share Christ with our city if we don’t share Him with Hispanics.”**

*~ Tim Stiemann, Oaklawn Presbyterian, Houston TX.*

Oaklawn and Hosanna have made prayer their first priority, sustaining them through many challenges. Oaklawn lost one-third of its congregation and half of its income to Hosanna. “But God has been an incredible God,” says Oaklawn member Gracie Saenz. “We have prayer warriors—people have been praying on a daily basis.” One of Hosanna’s prayers was that God would provide them a



*Oaklawn Presbyterian is the only Spanish language PCA church in Houston TX.*

young, bilingual Hispanic to serve as pastor. Instead, God gave them a retired minister who spoke no Spanish. Gerald Phillips, who agreed to serve as interim pastor, “fell in love” with the members of the church and community served by Hosanna. “After I’d been there for a time, I asked the session if they had found a pastor. They said, ‘We have—and it’s you!’” Gerald is now in his fourth year of service to Hosanna. The church, composed mainly of second and third generation Hispanics, holds services in English and has begun a Spanish language Sunday School class led by Roger Rodriguez.

Recognizing the importance of family in the Hispanic community has led Oaklawn and Hosanna to develop specific ministries. At Oaklawn volunteers work with children using Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF)—hoping that this will lead to relationships with the children’s families. Oaklawn has just begun offering English as a Second Language classes through



*Roger and Gloria Rodriguez, Dave and Sami Hernandez, Gerald and Donna Phillips.*

a local community college this year. They also plan to offer GED classes and provide a daycare for the many single working mothers in their community. “The only way our neighbors will get to know us is if we persist,” says Gloria. “We shouldn’t just be stuck in our churches—we need to share the Gospel with our neighbors,” agrees Mary Helen Ortega, from Oaklawn.

Emphasizes Tim, “The role of prayer is key to moving forward in church planting and all of our ministries. Without it, we are not going to see long-term results. When we work, we work—but when we pray, God works.”



*Drew Bennett, Lyle Caswell and Tim Rice*

## Sowing Seeds in Lakeland FL

When Tim Rice moved to Lakeland in 1986 to start a youth ministry at First Presbyterian Church, 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 at the time. But God does greater things than we could think or imagine.” Through student ministry and eventually through his work with RUF, sponsored by Covenant Presbyterian in Lakeland FL, Tim gained experience in building a ministry. Tim’s friends began to encourage him to plant a church in downtown Lakeland, which was beginning a large scale revitalization. “We started thinking: Millions of dollars are being poured into *STORY CONTINUES ON BACK PANEL.*

## MNA conferences (details at [pca-mna.org](http://pca-mna.org))

*MNA Church Planting Conference  
July 20-23, Orlando FL*

*Network of Portuguese Speaking Churches Gathering  
September 4-7, Stroudsburg PA*

*Ministry to State Symposium  
September 21-22, Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas TX*

*Developing Church Planting Networks,  
October 6-7, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia PA*

*Christian Community Development Association Conference  
October 21-25, Cincinnati OH*



## Every Church Plant a Church (continued)

refurbishing buildings and bringing in new business—what about the spiritual component?” remembers Tim.

A core group from Covenant—about ten families, including couples and singles—began to meet to pray about launching a new church. The group of friends was instrumental in the formation of the daughter church, helping to hold each other accountable. “There were times we realized if we weren’t committed to each other, it would fail,” says Dean Nederveld, who was part of the group. “Developing a vision for what the church was going to be helped us stay focused when we didn’t know what the finances would be or where we were going to meet.”

In January 1997, Trinity Presbyterian was launched in Lakeland’s downtown. Its goal? To continue to plant churches in every neighborhood and people group of the city. Thus far, Trinity Lakeland has launched Christ Community, led by Lyle Caswell, and Redeemer, led by David Martin, both in Lakeland, and Church of the Redeemer, led by Drew Bennett, in nearby Winter Haven. The launches demanded sacrifices of time, finances and energy from the members of Trinity Lakeland. Says Tim’s wife, Julie, “We’ve encountered feedback from 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 to see Jesus in a whole different way.” Gretchen Sweet, another member,

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

Trinity Lakeland has also partnered with Parker Street Ministries, located a few blocks from the church. Led by Trinity members Tim Mitchell and Ben Turner, the ministry seeks to renew whole families by developing relationships with the people who live in the highest crime area of the city. “It’s neat to see God step in and build relationships and establish a love both ways,” says Tim Mitchell. “You’ll see children from the Parker Street area sitting in church with families from Trinity and then go home with them to visit for the afternoon.” In the coming years, another church plant is planned in the Parker Street area.

“Church planting is an issue of teamwork, an issue of using our resources wisely.”

~ Tim Rice, Trinity Presbyterian, Lakeland FL

“Even if your church isn’t located near the needy, you’re still called to go find them,” Tim Mitchell continues. “We have been given the greatest privilege of sharing the Gospel with the poor and needy. It’s hard and it’s messy. But for God’s Kingdom to be glorified and built here on earth, we need to be seeking to reflect as much of heaven as possible.”



Members of Trinity’s core group take an evening to enjoy looking back on God’s work.



Christ Community Presbyterian, Lakeland FL, gather for Sunday Worship.

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.pca-mna.org](http://www.pca-mna.org). Material in *Multiply* may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to: Fred Marsh, Managing Editor/Photographer. Writing and design provided by Big Bridge, Asheville, NC ([www.thebigbridge.com](http://www.thebigbridge.com)). *Multiply* is published by MNA.