



Outreach Newsletter

A Publication of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
Board of Outreach North America

Churches Planting Churches

Expanding Your Witness for Christ to Reach More People
Spring 2010

Gaston Community Church

Gaston Community Church (GCC) was organized this past December and is a daughter church of First ARP Gastonia.



Rev. Eddie Spencer, Pastor of First ARP, wrote of the organization of this daughter church: "It is a day worthy of celebration for our church; who along with GCC gives thanks to God; He has indeed birthed a new congregation to build His kingdom, for His glory."

In the spring of 2007, the session of First ARP approved a committee to do demographics, identify a location, make a preliminary budget, and to recruit people for a satellite worship service. By the time the session gave the go ahead in November 2007, the committee had done the demographic work, had identified a place to meet, and had developed a budget.

With a core of 30 people committed, the church launched the satellite worship service in March 2008. The service began to draw people through word of mouth and personal notes.

Andy Holland was hired as the Music Leader and developed a good music team of instrumentalists and vocalists and has been an excellent worship leader. The church supported the church planting effort as evidenced by 165 people in attendance for the launch of the satellite services, and an average attendance of 110 people over the first two months. Senior Pastor Eddie Spencer led the satellite services for two months and then passed it on to Associate Pastor Mark Tankersley (who was soon called as the mission developer after assessment through ONA and approval by the presbytery).

Spencer observes that First ARP was "careful not to give the new church a philosophical direction" before a church planter was identified. It would be important for the mission developer to help set the philosophical direction. But, the leadership of First ARP wanted to lay the foundation for a healthy church start.

"It was worth the cost to get a good healthy church," Spencer said. The cost included the loss of some wonderful people and the loss of a significant number of people. "Giving has held up well," Spencer notes, "but it will take two or three years to recoup the attendance."

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From the Director

Dr. Alan J Avera

Why should churches plant new churches?

- The Church is God's primary plan for advancing His Kingdom in the world.
- Eighty percent of ARP churches are on an attendance plateau or in decline.
- Across American denominations, churches less than 20 years old are more likely to be growing churches than are churches older than 20 years (American Church Research Project).
- The average new church doubles in size from year one to year four, growing from an average of 40 people to over 80 (2007 Center for Missional Research study by Ed Stetzer and Phillip Connor).
- Sponsoring a new church plant usually has a revitalizing effect on the sponsoring church (see Farmer article on page 2 of this newsletter).
- The active support of the sponsoring church gives the new church a healthy start (see Gaston Community and Coddle Creek articles in this newsletter).



GCC Organization Service

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Dr. Jeffery Farmer: *Sponsoring new churches as a means of church revitalization*

The following is based on Dr. Jeffery C. Farmer's doctoral dissertation on *Church Planting Sponsorship: Statistical Analysis of Sponsoring a Church Plant as a Means of Revitalization of the Sponsor Churches*.

"The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not the sponsorship of a new church plant had an impact on selected church growth variables in the sponsoring churches." Churches were studied for two time periods: the five years before and the five years after sponsoring the church plant. Monetary variables (with adjustments for inflation) and worship attendance were both evaluated.

One of the concerns that people often have in planting a church is that the sponsoring church will lose too many

people. This study actually showed the opposite. "Worship attendance increased by 21.5% for the five years after the church plant. This finding was a surprise. Conventional logic would suggest that worship attendance would decrease after the sponsorship of a church plant due to worship attenders moving to the new church plant." The mission focus created by church planting tends to increase attendance!

Another concern churches often have is that planting a new church would be too great a financial burden. Once again, Farmer's study shows an opposite effect. "An objection to sponsoring a church plant has been that the church did not have enough money to do so. The findings of this study suggests this objection has little merit. Not only did the church members give more to the sponsor church,



they gave significantly more. Designated gifts increased 77.4% and tithes and offerings increased 48.4%." Apparently the focus on giving to a church plant stimulates other giving as well.

A conclusion that Farmer draws from his study is that planting new churches is beneficial to the health of established churches. "An implication of the study suggests that plateaued or declining churches should seriously and prayerfully consider sponsoring a church plant every three to five years in order to create a missional atmosphere in the local church... The result will be a revitalized local church, the expansion of the kingdom, and the glorification of Christ."

...Gaston

Continued from page 1

Ernie Summey, the clerk of the provisional session for the mission, saw many benefits to the parent church model. The greatest advantage is the "natural support that you wouldn't have" starting a church alone. Eddie Spencer was instrumental in providing the initial leadership and direction for the mission. The leadership group from the mother church provides the "beginning management" for the church. Some of the men from the leadership team are now elders at Gaston Community. In the case of Gaston Community, Mark Tankersley (as the associate pastor at the mother church) "knew the mother church and her commitment to the mission. He also provided strong and dedicated leadership for Gaston Community." First ARP was at a point of maximum capacity before planting Gaston Community. There was a need for another ARP church in this fastest growing residential area of Gastonia. "In

the beginning it was a step of faith. The whole process was God's will. It couldn't have happened if He wasn't in it."



Mark Tankersley
Planter and Pastor of GCC

God gave me a desire for church planting when I was in Statesville in the mid 1990s. However, this opportunity in Gastonia was the first realistic one for me to plant a church. God began sending people from First Presbyterian (PCUSA) to First ARP. Most of the families who helped us begin the mission with the intention of staying were strong evangelicals from First Presbyterian who had a zeal for God's Word and a love for Jesus Christ. Of the families who were a part of the original mission, 16 were from First ARP via First Presbyterian Church, 9 were from other churches, and 6 were long time members from First ARP.

In God's providence, one of the unique features is that I was one of the pastors in the parent church for 4 years before planting the mission church. This created a strong kinship to both the parent church and the mission, and a true love for both. I know, without equivocation, that many people at First ARP supported the work financially, and the leaders agreed to support me personally for over a year because they wanted me to succeed just as much as they wanted the mission to succeed. Some of the greatest



Youth Sunday GCC

support and encouragement I had for the mission has also come from Alan Avera, John Kimmons, Outreach North America, First Presbytery, and from an elder, Ernie Summey of First ARP, who was the Clerk of our Provisional Session.

While the parent church model has many benefits, there have also been moments of disappointment and hurt along the way. There were times of uncertainty as to whether or not the work would grow as people who originally came out to visit from First ARP began to drift back to the comforts and familiarity of the mother church downtown. There was the pain of hearing that some people were wondering why we were planting this church. There was also the pain I felt in leaving the people I had helped shepherd those four years. And yet, God prevailed.

I hope to see Gaston Community Church commission ministry leaders to leave the nest in God's timing to move out and plant another church. This is what I hope for, and I know it will take God's grace to accomplish it. And yet, I am more confident than ever, that God will prevail... again.

"In the beginning it was a step of faith. The whole process was God's will. It couldn't have happened if He wasn't in it."

Coddle Creek Plants Christ Church ARP



Coddle Creek ARP Church

Tom Patterson, Chairman of the Anniversary Committee at Coddle Creek

The planting of a new church is an exciting adventure. Every congregation should have the privilege of being on the front lines of starting a new church.

Coddle Creek Church dates back to 1753. With such a long history, it could have rested on the laurels of the past and been satisfied to maintain itself, but God had bigger plans for Coddle Creek.

It is believed that around 1871 a group of black members from Coddle Creek formed the Bethesda AME Zion Church a few miles away. This was Coddle Creek's first church plant - as far as we can tell. Today, the Bethesda Church continues to maintain a significant ministry in our community.

In 1885 and again in 1896, the ministers at Coddle Creek were instrumental in establishing the Mooresville ARP Church. The first attempt lasted about four years, and in 1896, a second attempt was successful. Now in its 114th year, the Mooresville Church continues to minister inside the city limits of a growing town.

In 1985, Coddle Creek decided to sponsor services on the eastern side of Lake Norman. Members of the congregation supported the initial evening worship services until a core group was gathered. The Coddle Creek pastor filled the pulpit. The Lakeside Fellowship Church is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

As Coddle Creek's 250th Anniversary approached in 2003, the congregation wanted to once again see something significant accomplished for Christ and His Church. It seemed logical to establish a daughter congregation. A fund was established with a goal of \$115,000 that was met and surpassed by the end of the Anniversary Year. We looked at the possibilities of establishing a church on the west side of Lake Norman. This time, a mission developer was called to plant the church. Again, the Coddle Creek people invested

their time in supporting this service while a core group was gathered. Christ Church in Denver has done well and is now approaching the time it will be organized.

What does the future hold for Coddle Creek? Will there be other church plants established by this old congregation? God has a plan for Coddle Creek.

What does the future hold for your church? Might your church become involved in planting a new congregation? It may be as simple as starting a satellite worship service in another community. It may involve partnering with several other congregations and jointly sponsoring a new mission. Coddle Creek is not a large congregation, and it is not a wealthy congregation. Yet God has multiplied it four times. Does God have a church planting plan for your church?

“Far more than just sending money, Coddle Creek has been engaged in planting and developing this new church.”

*Rev. Jamie Hunt
Pastor Coddle Creek ARP*

What are the advantages of “daughtering” a new church? There are several which Coddle Creek has experienced:

1. Our congregation has enjoyed involvement and the sense of ownership and responsibility with this new church. The Coddle Creek committee, with the help of ONA and First Presbytery's Church Extension Committee, entered into a search for a good location for a new church. We chose Denver because some members either lived in Denver or had family there. After being called as the Mission Developer, Morrie Lawing worshipped with us for a number of months. Two of our elders served on the provisional session. A prayer time was established each Sunday morning for the express purpose of praying for the work. Far more than just sending money, Coddle Creek has been engaged in planting and developing this new church.

2. With such deep involvement, Coddle Creek has to some extent been able to influence the values and ethos of the daughter church. Morrie interacted with

our congregation and was able to understand the commitments of the mother church in terms of our theological and programmatic purposes. Consequently, there has been no disappointment or sense of surprise in the character of the daughter church. Good support continues for the church.

3. The two elders who have served on the provisional session have grown considerably. They are better elders at Coddle Creek than before because they are more aware of the importance of outreach and of vision for the future.

4. This model of church planting saves the presbytery and synod time and resources while offering some more intense supervision of the work. The presbytery and synod agencies still participate in funding but are relieved of the basic underwriting of the ministry.

*Rev. Morrie Lawing
Mission Developer, Christ Church ARP*

What is the best way to start a new church? I have had the privilege of planting two ARP churches. The first was a “parachute” drop, and now I am planting a daughter church. What a difference it makes for me as a church planter to have the support, encouragement, and prayers of the people of Coddle Creek!

From the beginning our family was received into the Coddle Creek congregation with open arms. We worshiped with them when we first moved to the field. What a blessing to get to know these dear people! We discovered that a group of saints had been praying for the future church planter and his family for two years prior to our arrival and is still praying for us and our fledgling church flock to this day- seven years later!

In addition to financial support, there have been so many additional blessings that our mother church provided: Members helped convert a store front facility for worship, a Sunday School class gives monthly to our building fund, Pastor Jamie Hunt has times of prayer and encouragement with us, and even an elder provides us with fresh vegetables from his garden.

The blessings to me, my family, and our church family are too numerous to count. We will forever be grateful to Coddle Creek. I encourage your church to start a church to extend the Kingdom through your support and encouragement!

Churches Planting Churches in Catawba Presbytery

Rev. Andy Stager

The Rock Hill Parenting Church Community (pastors and elders from Ebenezer, Tirzah, and First ARP Churches) is 1/4 of the way through a two-year “Lamaze” course. Our parenting prayer is “to daughter three healthy, Gospel-centered ARP churches in York County by 2013- churches which reach the lost, nurture believers, and transform our communities to the glory of God.”

We have been equipped to birth congregation-wide prayer initiatives that call upon the Holy Spirit to sweep across the face of our congregations and communities. We have closely examined our own health as prenatal mother churches, committing to alter our diet and exercise regimes as prescribed by the Great Physician. We have begun to cast our vision for church parenting within our congregations in order to gain the ownership of our members. In the process, we have grown together as parenting churches and become more vulnerable with one another as we pray for one another’s goals and desires. Through this training, the often intimidating prospect of daughtering a church has become less so, while our dependence on and confidence in the Lord has continued to increase. Pray with us that God’s Kingdom would be advanced in York County, South Carolina!

Another Catawba Presbytery congregation, [First Presbyterian Church of Columbia](#), is actively considering the possibility of planting a daughter church in the Columbia area. Pray for the spread of the Gospel in Columbia through church planting.

News and Notes from the Field

[Hope Chapel in Greensboro, NC](#) has just finished a recording of hymns with musicians from Hope Chapel (<http://www.hopechapel-greensboro.org/hymns-record.html>). They are also providing a 7 week church planting internship for 3 college students to grow in their faith and and experience with church planting. Each student will live with a family from the church and be developing and implementing a week long “Seek the City” mission’s project for adults, youth and children in Greensboro.

[Riverside Presbyterian in Prattville, AL](#) had their first morning worship service Easter Sunday and 56 people attended!

[SonLife Church in Jacksonville, FL](#) received their first members Easter Sunday.

[Redeemer ARP Church in Blacksburg, VA](#) (a church planted by Virginia Presbytery in 2003) purchased a former fraternity house, that is very central and very visible from US-460-bypass with a very high traffic count. Redeemer is making renovations and adding a small addition to transform it into a church building.

[Freedom Bridge Mission in Wagram, NC](#) now has over 200 in attendance. There were 23 professions of faith and baptisms last year.

[Christ Fellowship Church in Asheville](#) will be dissolved on June 30. Permanent endowments in the church’s name have been established with Outreach North America, World Witness, and Christian Education. The remaining assets have been given to First Presbytery for church planting.

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