



# Outreach Newsletter

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

## Meeting Places

The challenges and blessings of finding a place to worship

Spring 2011



### From Cafetorium to Sanctuary

By Rev. Mike Jones, Hope Church, Tampa, FL

Hope Church began as a mission in 2000. Our first meeting place was a middle school *cafetorium* (part cafeteria, part auditorium). While it was a nice facility, it was not easy to find, expensive, and smelled like a middle school cafeteria. That school soon outgrew our finances and so we made our first move to a local community center which was much cheaper and smelled a little better, but “You get what you pay for!” We met at that location for a while and outgrew it- so we moved AGAIN- this time to a different middle school gym, which had better visibility but was expensive- and LOUD.

From that middle school we moved to a local YMCA which had just purchased a former Catholic Church building. This was a good place for us and our church grew nicely in the two years we were able to meet there. Then the YMCA decided to remodel the space and asked if we would move to another YMCA gym. The sound was loud, the space was hard to find, the set up took hours, and the smell of old gym shoes is second only to the smell of middle school spoiled milk as a distraction from worship! Five moves in five years was brutal.

After a few (long!) months in the gym, a new dance studio opened near our meeting place and we were able to rent it for Sundays. Again, expensive, cramped, and not too conducive to worship, but we were able to grow some in the time we met there. After a full year, the original YMCA finished their renovations and invited us back to use their space where we were able to launch a fund raising campaign and raise enough for our first

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### From the Director

*Buildings Are Great Tools for Ministry*

Dr. Alan J. Avera, Executive Director

*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:4-5 ESV)*

As a child, I remember being taught to interlock the fingers of my two hands, and then as I folded my two hands together say, “Here’s the church.” Then I would unlock my two pointer fingers and point them upwards saying, “and here’s the steeple.” Then I opened my hands to reveal my fingers pointing upward, wiggling my fingers saying, “Open the doors and see all the people.”

The New Testament is clear that a church is not the building. The church is the assembly of people being built as living stones on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ. However, a building can be a great tool for ministry. The building can be a place to worship the living God, give us a visible presence in the community, and also provide spaces for education, discipleship, and other ministry.

If your church has a comfortable church building, imagine what it would be like if you did not have that building. Imagine what it would be like if you had to be creative about finding a place to meet for worship and ministry. Imagine what it would be like if you had to move from place to place over a period of time. That is one of the opportunities and challenges facing our newly planted mission churches.

# In a Storefront. . .



By Greg Duke, Riverside Presbyterian, Prattville, AL

For the past year, Riverside Church has been hauling everything needed for conducting a public worship service (chairs, tables, sound system and various supplies) in a 6 x 10 ft. covered utility trailer. We have been renting a local gymnasium and a small office that I use for my study. The weekly setting up and tearing down has been fun but challenging. For several months now we have also been gathering in different homes throughout the city for a mid-week fellowship and Bible study. With kids and people all over the place, this too has been fun but very challenging.

While the slow economy has thankfully not had an impact on our local giving, it has had a huge impact on retail space in the city of Prattville. This has afforded us

the opportunity to lease and move into a 4,500 sq. ft. storefront facility that is in the fastest growing area of the city and smack dab in the middle of our target area. We anticipate much growth and opportunity for ministry as we now have a large and very visible place to meet whenever we want for worship, fellowships and outreach activities. Thank you for praying for the mission and witness of Riverside Church.



first worship service



Kim Cabbage & Morgan Illman



James Miller helping the electrician



lunch!



# In a School. . .

HOPE CHAPEL IN THE CITY. FOR THE CITY.

By Rev. Todd Jones, Hope Chapel, Greensboro, NC

When we started this church planting journey two and a half years ago, we wanted to meet in the neighborhood. We visited the local recreation center, but negotiations came to a quick halt when the city said no churches were allowed in the facility. Then we turned to the local elementary school in the center of our target area. We loved the location and began talking with the principal about renting space. At first the principal was reluctant and limited what areas of the building we could use, but over time trust was established and as we grew we were allowed to rent additional rooms in the facility.

As I think about the pros of meeting at Lindley Elementary school, I would say first and foremost is the opportunity to build a relationship with the school staff and to develop a partnership with them. Secondly, the school provided us with opportunities to network with a large number of parents and children in the neigh-

borhood who attended Lindley. Thirdly, the school was significantly cheaper financially for us. Fourthly, meeting at the school allowed our regular attenders and members to see themselves as missionaries to the school and to the neighborhood and helped put feet to our vision and mission. Lastly, because we were mobile, it provided all our people with the opportunity to serve on Sunday mornings. We rotated set up teams and it has helped further build *servicing* into the ethos of our community.

In regards to the cons, I honestly cannot think of any that would cause me not to meet in a school. In fact, if I were ever to plant another church, I would definitely begin by meeting in a local school. It has been one of the greatest blessings for our church and as we begin transition to a more permanent rental space this fall, one thing that we are committed to is continuing our partnership with Lindley Elementary School. Our people

love the teachers, faculty and students so much that this was their only major concern about moving to a different worship space. So, to all the young church planters out there I would say if you can meet in a school, go for it. You will be amazed at what God will do. Do not let initial resistance from the principal or faculty keep you from moving forward. You will be amazed as you love and serve them how God will work to bring about trust and further His kingdom.



# In a Hotel. . .



By Rev. Bob Hovey, SonLife Church, Jacksonville, FL

At SonLife we have been all over the board as far as meeting places. We started out in a gorgeous worship space called the Zamar Center, but it was expensive and out of the way. Sometimes we had more people in the (paid) praise team than we had in the congregation!

From there we went to a YMCA; It was FREE, but a month after we began there, I was told we could only meet there once a month.



I pointed out that a Hindu group met there immediately after us every Sunday, but they were not concerned about them.

The following Sundays we went back and forth between the Wingate Inn and a Sheraton Hotel. We stayed at the Wingate over a year with one large room and one "board room." It was great. Last year we had a wedding there during our Valentines Sunday service followed by a reception. It was beautiful! We had 30-35 non-churched friends and family attend. One couple, who were living together, committed to (and did!) get

married before they left the building! We loved the Wingate and they loved us back!

One of the super cool things about meeting at the Wingate is that sometimes people staying at the hotel would come worship with us. What made this extra special was most of them were Mayo Clinic patients or family. This became a whole new ministry for us; One patient (from California) came and lived with us for 11 days and has been back twice since. We have kept in touch with several from all over the country.

This year we moved to the Holiday Inn because we needed more space. It has been wonderful as well. One week there was a conference of about 100 people in the adjoining room on Sunday morning! I know they heard everything going on with us, and we saw several of them checking out our information table in the foyer!

My favorite worship venue is also our cheapest, the beach. One Sunday we went down to the beach for worship and had seven beach baptisms. A couple of folks came on beach bikes to join us! I am excited to go back on May 8 and hopefully we will have more baptisms!

There is something holy about taking the church TO people in the culture, instead of waiting for people in the culture to come to the church. Jesus did very few of His miracles in the temple. I think it is called incarnational, or missional or something like that! We love it- and I think Jesus does too!

# In Our Own Building!



By Rev. Marty Taylor  
Living Waters Church, Lake Wylie, NC

On February 20, 2011, the Living Waters Church family worshipped and celebrated in a beautiful new home of our own. This realization of a church building came after nearly ten years of prayer and commitment on the part of a solid core group, other York County ARP churches, and ONA.

After an exciting start ten years ago, Living Waters has weathered and persevered through many trials. We were fortunate to have met and worshipped in the Bethel Elementary School for over eight years. Honestly, the setting up and taking down, week after week, takes a toll on a church. But for us, it also strengthened our faith and our faithfulness to each other and to our mission.

The congregation has been steadfast in its commitment to the Lake Wylie area that they targeted from the beginning. With the help and support of Rock Hill and Clover churches, this family was able to survive what others have not. God has been gracious throughout.

We are grateful to God, to our ARP family, and especially to ONA for the support in prayer and in finances; We were able to see and feel God's answer to thousands of prayers.

Please come and visit our new home at 612 Bethel School Rd., Lake Wylie, SC. We would love to share God's blessings with you anytime.



## Church Planting & Renewal Conference July 19-21

ONA and Erskine Seminary are co-sponsoring the Global Church Advancement (GCA) Church Planting and Renewal Conference this summer, July 19-21 at Erskine.

There will be a special ARP/ONA/Erskine registration price for this conference of \$235 (\$150 for spouses) for those who register by June 10. Regular registration price is \$450.

Contact the ONA office (864-232-8297 ext. 229) for the discount code before registering on the GCA website ([www.gca.cc](http://www.gca.cc)).

# • • • Cafetorium

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building project. In 2009, our 8th move was into our own building- a 7500 sq. ft. facility that is ours all the time. Add to that the house that was existing on our property and we now have over 10,000 sq. ft. of ministry space. That is a bit more than the 8 x 12 ft. trailer we used to pull all over town!

God has blessed us with continued growth as a result of preaching His Word, worshipping Him and presenting the gospel. It is also invaluable having a full time presence, a beautiful sign, a great location and space! Our building is used just about every day and night of the week. We have support groups, prayer groups of parents from the schools located three doors from our church building, a Christian counseling center, Bible studies, ministry groups, scouts and small groups throughout the week. Our Sundays are packed with worship services, youth group, Sunday teaching times and small groups. This space also gives us an opportunity to reach into the local community with concerts, speakers, events and programs. We have plans for building phases two and three on this property, as well as intentional daughtering of churches throughout the Tampa Bay area.

While it is not that distant a memory, I honestly do not know how we were able to *do* church without a building! God is so good to provide what all we need! Please pray for those churches that have not yet been able to build or buy a building! It is a challenging dynamic of church planting!

## News and Notes from the Field

**SonLife Church in Jacksonville, FL** had their second birthday with 48 in attendance. The picnic got rained out, so they had a church luncheon there in the Holiday Inn- it was great!



**Riverside Church In Prattville, AL** worshiped for the first time in their new building April 9; It was also the ordination service for mission developer Greg Duke.

**Grace Church Leith in Leith, Scotland**, a mission of First Presbytery, had a great response on April 7 at their *Debating Delusions* event discussing Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion*. As many as 50% of those who attended were non-Christians.

**The ARP continues to expand in Texas.** Catawba Presbytery has approved church planting resident evangelists to explore new works in Texas. Tim Bowers will be moving to San Antonio, and David Winburne to Dallas. San Antonio is the 7th largest city in the United States, and Dallas is the 9th largest.

**Other new works in Catawba:** The Parenting Church Community in Rock Hill, SC is continuing to progress toward planting a new church in York County. In addition, Catawba has called Andy Stager as a resident evangelist to work with Living Waters in Lake Wylie, SC. Grace Presbyterian Church, the daughter congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, is narrowing its search for a church planter.

**Asheville, NC:** First Presbytery has called Duff James as an evangelist to explore a new work in Asheville, NC.

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