



Outreach Newsletter

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Different tribes, languages, peoples, and nations:
Changing Faces of the ARP Church

The Iranian Christian Church



Javad Pishghadamian

By Rev. Tat Stewart
Church of the Atonement, Silver Spring, Maryland

The Iranian Christian Church, which is a mission congregation of Northeast Presbytery, meets at Church of the Atonement in Silver Spring, Maryland. It is a small congregation of first generation Muslim background believers from Iran, who meet weekly under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Javad Pishghadamian. Javad, like his congregation, came to faith in Christ through the witness of Atonement.

My wife Patty and I were both the children of Presbyterian medical missionaries to Iran and returned as missionaries to Iran, but after a year we were forced to return to the States due to political unrest. I was called to be the pastor of Church of the Atonement in the early 1980s, and it was not long before we began making contacts with Iranians and started a Bible study in our home. This then grew into a Sunday afternoon Bible study and worship service, which met in the chapel of Church of the Atonement. Patty provided the music with her keyboard and taught the congregation how to sing Persian hymns.

As the church grew, weekly home Bible studies developed in Baltimore, Northern Virginia, and Silver Spring. As the Iranian population soared in the greater Washington D.C. metro area, our church reached out to this immigrant community with ads in the local Farsi newspaper as well as sharing the Good News of the gospel on local Farsi radio programs. We offered free New Testaments to those who would call and give our church their names and addresses. Another way of reaching out to the Iranian community was designating one Sunday a month as friendship Sunday and encouraging members to invite friends and relatives to attend church and enjoy a meal together. These efforts produced a large database of contacts for the church. As Iranians were coming to Christ, the church developed a standardized process for preparing candidates for baptism. After participating in a six

Continued on page 3



From the Director Not Your Father's ARP Church

Dr. Alan J. Avera, Executive Director

The faces in the ARP Church have changed drastically over the past 25 years. Have you noticed these changes?

- The second largest church in the ARP is now a Korean congregation - the Hyo Shin Bible Presbyterian Church in Flushing, NY. Hyo Shin, a congregation in Northeast Presbytery, has over 1,100 communicant members and seven worship services each Sunday.
- Of the 293 churches in the ARP Synod, 40 are Korean; that is 13.5% of the Synod's churches.
- The ARP now has churches or missions from the following backgrounds: African, African-American, Chinese, Hispanic, Hungarian, Iranian, and Korean.
- The ARP General Synod extends geographically from South Florida to the northern tip of Nova Scotia, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Some of you may have noticed these changes, but others may not have noticed since these changes have not been uniform across all of our presbyteries. For example, some of our presbyteries have no Korean congregations, while other presbyteries, such as Northeast, are approaching being 50% Korean.

The faces in North America are changing. The US Census Bureau reported that more than half of the growth in the total population in the United States between 2000 and 2010 was due to the increase in the Hispanic population, while the Asian population grew by 43% over the ten-year period, faster than any other major racial group. Since the faces of North America are changing, the faces in the ARP are likely to continue changing. Acts 17:26 tells us that God determines the exact places where people live. Therefore, I ask readers of this newsletter to reflect on what God means by these population shifts. Ask yourself, "What are the implications for the ARP Church in the future?"

Inside this Issue...

- The Iranian Christian Church
- Testimony from China
- Working Together
- African ARP Mission
- ARPs in Scotland
- News and Notes from the Field

Testimony from China

By Dr. Jun Jian "Jeff" Liu
Tampa Chinese Presbyterian

I am from a country village in China. In 1973, my mom died from an illness and left my father with five little children. The oldest one was 9, and the youngest one was 7 months old. I was 5 at the time and was the middle child. In my memory, the whole family struggled to survive from then on. The basic needs of food and clothes seemed far away from us. The village shared little food. I remember having a goat that provided milk for us. Since we lived with a goat, we smelled like one too. Nobody wanted anything to do with us smelly children. We never thought about the inner being needs; such as love, caring, and kindness. But, I needed these in my life, which is more important than food.

In 1982, I was 14 years old and in middle school. China was still in pain of the disaster of the Cultural Revolution, especially in the countryside. My academics were good, but I was considered an anti-revolutionist and a capitalist and criticized a lot by the school administration. I felt more and more hopeless in my life. I experienced a crisis.

At this time, I met a student who was a Christian. He led me to something called a *church*, which was a small group of elderly people, meeting in a dark

room. I waited at the door and could not see anything; I just heard praying and singing. Once they finished, a lady that attended this *church* came up to me and began to pray for me. She touched my shoulder and said something of a blessing. I could not understand what she said, but my heart was totally touched by the love they showed me. I realized that I was a sinner and I knew I needed to be cleansed and to be forgiven. I sensed the touch of God and I accepted Jesus as my Savior. That evening changed and sealed the rest of my life.

The school soon found out about my belief in Jesus Christ. They tried all kinds of methods to get me not to convert. Finally, they dismissed me from school because of my faith. Later on, my father cut off our relationship due to my choice to follow Jesus. I knew Jesus saved me and gave me new life. He always loves me even though the world left me. I committed myself to God and to serve Him all my life. In the early 1980s, many church leaders, who were just released from the jails after the Cultural Revolution, went from one village to another preaching the gospel. I joined with them and became a member of these Evangelistic teams.

The Chinese house church has experienced great revivals since the late 1970s, showing a testimony to the world that God's Word will never be chained. With growing numbers of Christians, there is an increasing need for pastoring. But, for more than 30 years, the Chinese church did not have anyone trained in

theology. I had a call from God and wanted to be trained. By God's grace, I went to Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL in 2000. While I was in seminary, I preached at the Chinese Church in Tampa once a month. The Church then called me as a pastor, and with the help of the pastor and session of Trinity ARP Church, I was called to be an intern and then called by Florida Presbytery to serve as a Mission Developer/Pastor.

Reformed theology shaped me a lot. I thank God that He gave me the chance to get to know the ARP Church and to get involved in it. I love this tradition and know I have a responsibility to carry this denomination to the Chinese community. We are very thankful for the Tampa Trinity Church for sharing their resources with us. Most importantly, their love, caring and acceptance has helped us keep going; especially as they embraced us when we were down. We still need to do more. There is a long road before us to shape our church into this wonderful tradition. I believe that we will go further and further, and more and more ARP Chinese churches will appear.



Jeff and Hsin Hsiu Liu

Working Together

By Rev. Jac Coad
Trinity ARP Church, Tampa, Florida

What a blessing to have two congregations of believers - Trinity ARP Church and Tampa Chinese Presbyterian Church (TCPC) - come together from opposite sides of the earth and dwell together in unity (Psalm 133)!

When TCPC called Jeff Liu, a student from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, we assisted in the immigration process. A year later, Jeff was ordained and called by Florida Presbytery as Mission Developer of TCPC. We share our building for worship on Sundays. TCPC has their own service in Mandarin, but their children and youth attend Trin-

ity's Sunday school programs in English. We always unite for a combined worship service at Christmas. One member said, "It is a foretaste of worship in Heaven."

TCPC has been a blessing to Trinity. Pastor Liu has shared his amazing testimony with our church and has preached on several occasions. The Chinese young people have been a vital part of our youth group and have sung and played instruments in our services. As TCPC continues to grow, they contribute more to the maintenance of the grounds and buildings.

Through TCPC I had the joy baptizing a former retired communist official who was visiting his family in Tampa. One of the things that this man said impressed him about Christianity was that

during a downpour on a Sunday morning, an American man (one of Trinity's deacons) had walked into the rain to hold an umbrella over him and his wife. This new Christian and his wife went back to China, united with a small house church, and have made a huge impact for the Kingdom of God.

I am often encouraged by the enthusiasm I see at TCPC and the many conversions this church is experiencing. But, the greatest blessing has been to see what God is doing through the miraculous revival in the Chinese and Taiwanese people. The Lord has also given me a special friend in Pastor Liu who encourages me and amazes me with his simple faith and gigantic love for God's people. What a blessing!

... Iranian

Continued from page 1



Fellowship lunch

month period of study, candidates would appear before the elders and share their testimonies. On the day of their baptism, they were asked to invite their family and friends to attend so that they would be present to hear their testimonies. These testimonies often took twenty minutes or more. During one of these services, we had five baptisms and the worship service went on for three hours!

In the 1990s, Church of the Atonement let the Iranian Church use one of the houses that they owned. This house was used as a church office, guest room, and meeting place for many years. As the Iranian Church matured, the criteria for formal membership was estab-

lished, followed by six months of study on the character qualities of elders and then the election of its first elders. The church spent a year working on its statement of faith, and when it was finished, it was presented to the congregation and each member came forward and ceremoniously signed it. One of the first elders of the church was Mr. Mirbaha, who had come to faith in Iran and who brought a depth of experience and a warm Christian heart. Another man who served so faithfully as an elder was Javad Pishghadamian, who now serves as the pastor. Javad was first witnessed to by a Bible college student, who later gave him a Farsi Bible, and then followed up by contacting me. Javad quickly became a part of the fellowship and in due time came to faith in Christ. He later married Nazy, who was a very active member in the Iranian Church of Dallas, TX and who has become a vital part of the team. Javad was later ordained by the Iranian Presbyterian Church.

At the present, the congregation meets on Sunday afternoons at the Church of the Atonement. There is an adult Bible study followed by a worship service. The average attendance is around 35 to 40.

There is an active children's program headed by Mrs. Kathy Amar. There are two weekly home Bible studies- one in Baltimore and the other in Silver Spring. The church also sponsors an annual Bible Conference and special outreach services at Christmas and Iranian New Years. The church continues to grow with new immigrants from Iran. Over the life of this little congregation, **over a hundred Muslims from Iran have come to faith in Jesus Christ!** What began as a friendship with one Iranian believer, is today a vital congregation testifying to the power of the gospel to transform the lives of Muslim men and women.



Javad and Nazy Pishghadamian

African ARP Mission

*By Rev. Zachary Kariuki
Grace International Church Charlotte*



Zachary and Ruth Kariuki

Grace International Church Charlotte, also known as Africa ARP Mission, offers the African community in Charlotte, NC a place to worship God with other Africans in a service that includes elements of African culture. The church invites people of different ethnic backgrounds to join with them in sharing the love of Christ. The preaching is in English, but the music has an African flavor and is in both Swahili and English.

The mission was launched February 12, 2006 to reach the lost and to present Christ to the African Community in Charlotte. We seek to worship in spirit

and in truth, to reach the lost by building bridges to Christ, and to continue serving Africans, especially Kenyans, by making disciples who live according to God's Word. Our mission is to lead our African church community into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ so that God's grace transforms lives. We exist to offer a church home for all Africans and their friends from all nationalities to gather and develop friendships, talents, study the Word of God, pray together for the needs of our families, and to experience international worship services for the glory of God.

My wife Ruth and I and a team of volunteers lead the worship services on Sunday afternoons at Back Creek ARP Church. We have seen the Lord working in peoples' lives through the ministry. People have given their lives to Christ, experienced personal growth and development, and spiritual growth. The church also intervenes for the various needs of the community and we have seen the Lord using us in many ways- especially with transition for the people who move

to Charlotte from Africa. Twice a year we have a joint service with Back Creek ARP church and participate in the worship.

Grace International has a unique way of having Sunday school for the children. We mix the US and African cultures followed by snacks and free time. The adult service is combined with youth where I preach the gospel of Christ Jesus.

I would like to thank Pastor Wayne Frazier and the Back Creek church family for allowing us to use their facility. Please continue to pray for us as we engage ourselves in the ministry call of God.

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church members

ARPs in Scotland

First Presbytery is sponsoring church planting in Scotland. The first mission is Grace Church Leith in the Edinburgh area. Athole Rennie is the mission developer and is planning the public launch of the church in September.

Athole and his wife Rosalynd have already been making contacts and having outreach events in Leith. Someone who has been attending their interest group recently came to faith! The events included: *Debating Delusions*; *The Arrogance of Christianity - How can Christians believe there's only one way to God?*; and *The Agony of Suffering - How can a loving God let bad things happen?* These events addressed the commonly held objections to Christianity that the Rennies have encountered as they have made contact with people in their community.

Below are some of the questions that people asked:

- If God is all knowing and all powerful, then why doesn't he make us all believe the same thing about him?
- If we acknowledge that only one religion can be true, then how can we be sure that it's Christianity?
- Are the millions of non-Christians condemned to *hell*? How can a *just* God condemn millions of young non-Christian children?
- What is so good about eternal life?

As you can see from the kind of questions that people were asking, it is clear that they were engaging with the topic!

(photo right)

News and Notes from the Field

Grace Church Leith, Scotland is having its public launch in September 4.

Grace Presbyterian Church in Pontiac, SC is a new mission and daughter church of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC. Brandon Barrett is the mission developer.

Hope Chapel in Greensboro, NC held a week-long service/outreach week called "Our GSO" July 18-23.

Christ Presbyterian in Grove City, PA has a new student intern, Jonathan Kuciemba, who begins seminary this fall. Mission Developer Iain Duguid led a conference on preaching in England.

Grace Community ARP Church in Black Creek, NC is finishing their first building. They have provided much of the labor themselves.



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