

# outreach



newsletter

presbytery approaches to planting churches

## Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery Church Planting With An Attitude

By Rev. Bob Illman

Connections Presbyterian Church, Madison, AL



Bob and Soo Yong

The Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery has an ONA committee that has been blessed with serving a presbytery with an attitude. That attitude is one of joyful obedience to God's command to further His Kingdom. In other words, it is easy to be on a church planting committee when the presbytery wants to plant churches!

After several years of inactivity, we have been awakened to the delights of seeing God work in ways we would have never imagined, and it has energized our whole presbytery. Was it a great strategic plan for planting x number of churches in y number of years? No- it was God's Spirit working through a united presbytery.

This excitement began for us in the spring of 2007, when I was beginning the work of establishing Connections Presbyterian Church in Madison, AL. We are grateful for the work of the ONA Assessment Center. I was vetted by the Assessment Center, giving our presbytery a confidence that we were beginning the right way. Our presbytery began to financially support Connections, and most of our churches began monthly support too. We prayed that God would help us establish one new work in the presbytery. Was our vision ever limited!

As Connections began worship services, we received Rev. Soo Yong Kim into the presbytery as a church planter. He was assigned to Connections, and they were soon meeting in the rented location Connections provided. As Hanmaum Church began, the two missions met together for the worship service, and then the Koreans were "excused" to meet in an adjoining room for their own, Korean language sermon. Hanmaum grew, and finally, they purchased their own property, and were on their way as an independent mission.

Meanwhile, I began holding an exploratory Bible study in Montgomery, AL. Our goal was to establish a mission work in Montgomery. Instead, God gave us a new mission in Prattville, about 10 miles north of Montgomery. Today, Riverside Church, pastored by Rev. Greg Duke, is a thriving mission church meeting in a spacious facility.

Connections has now organized and moved into their own facility in Madison. We continue to faithfully support Riverside

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## From the Director

Dr. Alan J. Avera, Executive Director



The purpose of ONA is to introduce people in the United States and Canada to Jesus Christ, primarily by helping our presbyteries plant new churches and renew existing churches.

ONA is tasked by Synod with helping our presbyteries and their churches become increasingly effective in reaching people for Christ through evangelism, new church development, existing church renewal and multi-ethnic ministry. We provide the presbyteries with a variety of resources and tools.

ONA does not plant churches; presbyteries plant churches. ONA does not call church planters; presbyteries call church planters. ONA exists to help presbyteries accomplish their goals in outreach to their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this newsletter, we are focusing on presbytery approaches to church planting. Each of our ten ARP presbyteries is different. We will look at church planting approaches in three presbyteries: Tennessee-Alabama, First, and Catawba. We also include an article on the experience an ARP minister had in a Reformed Presbyterian Church North America presbytery in Indiana. In the state of Indiana, this presbytery has multiplied from one church to ten churches through church planting.

The task of reaching people for Christ is extensive enough that it requires a team effort. It requires the work of individuals, local churches, presbyteries, and Synod's Board of ONA.

## Catawba

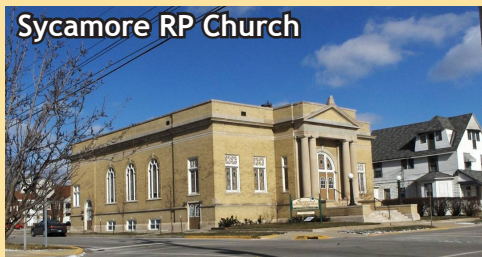
Andy and Ellie Stager, who are exploring church planting in the Rock Hill/ Lake Wylie area of South Carolina, hosted a hymn singing and potluck at their house.



## Inside this Issue...

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## Experiencing Church Planting Culture in the RPCNA



By Rev. Bill Vandoodewaard

During the summer of 2006 my family and I moved to central Indiana where I taught at a university. We were ARP's, and I was a student under care at the time, but in God's providence we found ourselves in a state with no ARP churches, so friends recommended that we visit Sycamore Reformed Presbyterian (RPCNA) in Kokomo. Warmly welcomed, we soon found ourselves at home in this vibrant congregation begun as a church plant years earlier. A year later we found ourselves deeply engaged in the life of the church, as I started interning under their pastor, Barry York, in conjunction with my ARP Presbytery and our home congregation; our initial visit turned into two years of valuable hands-on ministry.

My wife and I had grown up in old, Christian families; our churches were typical, well established congregations. This congregation challenged not only our preconceived ideas about church planting, but also placed us in many situations that challenged our faith. We read about Christ eating with prostitutes and thought little of it, but when one wanted to hold our baby at a fellowship lunch, it put a new perspective on loving the unlovely.

This congregation was largely first-generation Christians, and almost everyone was new to the Reformed faith; even the pastor had been converted through campus ministry in his college years. This congregation was typical of the ten other RP congregations and

church plants (begun with one in the 1960's) across Indiana in the Great Lakes - Gulf Presbytery. (It basically stretches from Chicago and Michigan down the Mississippi Valley and then out towards the East Coast; Indiana is really the central concentration, and the area of the most focused church planting culture.) While each plant reflected their own community to a degree, they all had an evangelical heart, confessional Reformed theology, and Psalm-singing worship.

What made these churches evangelistically visionary? How could many of the teenagers in the church deal socially with drug addicts better than we could? We had a lot to learn.

One characteristic of this church planting culture was gracious hospitality. People opened their homes for meals, using their houses as a ministry base to neighbors, co-workers and friends. Sunday fellowship meals at the church were a weekly occasion where members ministered to each other as well as the men from a local rescue mission. In home and church, the congregation loved us where we were at. We were not scrutinized, or desperately welcomed; the members of the church genuinely wanted us to be part of their lives. They loved people because they knew Christ's love.

This love was combined with humble, gracious discipling and mentorship modeled by elders/pastors and woven into congregants' lives. Members were active in encouraging others to live by faith in Christ and grow in His grace. Everyone experienced shepherding and discipleship. Pastors and elders maintained meaningful relationships with the flock. The church had a general culture of wanting to love and know each other and newcomers. At the same time, they did not ignore or excuse sin. Necessary exhortation, rebuke, and warning took place: there was iron sharpening iron, but in the context of an evident, existing relationship of Christian

love. The combination of evangelism and deliberate, active mentoring was central to the culture of church planting in the presbytery.

Another grace evident to us was patient trust. Though the work was often hard, the effort was steady, despite deep disappointments and hard situations. The congregation understood that God would bless His Word spoken and lived; it would not return to him void. They knew that if they could be saved, so could anyone else. They ministered and loved to glorify God, regardless of results. In some ways, God used the determined ministry of these frontline churches to make them beautiful before they saw fruit. While to us the physical landscape of a depressed central Indiana factory town was bleak, the spiritual landscape of the church here was beautiful. It was not at all perfect, but the beauty of Christ's redeeming grace was clearly evident.

Over the two-year internship, we learned one lesson over and over again from these Indiana churches: the one thing you most need to plant a congregation is a love for Christ. A true love

“the one thing you most need to plant a congregation is a love for Christ”

for the Saviour will express itself in trust in Him, and a love for sinners like Jesus has. If you have this, you do not need multiple programs, gimmicks, your own building, or even music with your singing. Obeying the greatest commandment to love God above all and your neighbor as yourself is still a lesson we are learning—something that every congregation desperately needs its people to know.

## ... attitude

Continued from page 1

and Hanmaum both financially and with prayer. We keep our eyes out for new locations for mission development and for mission developers.

The bottom line is that planting churches has given our presbytery a new

attitude. We can better see how we relate together as we work to build His Kingdom. Teddy Ray, the chairman of our ONA committee when we began planting, and Steve Weber, the current chairman, both know that when they give their reports on the floor of presbytery, every ear is open to hear what God is doing next. The attitude is there— an attitude of gratitude!



# First Presbytery

## Willing to Explore Opportunities

By Tom Patterson

First Presbytery has utilized a number of approaches in its church planting efforts over the years. Some have worked better than others, but there is no one model that stands out above the others. All the models have had success, and all the models have had failures. To be successful, a church plant must have the Lord's hand upon it. Humanly speaking,

“ To be successful, a church plant must have the Lord's hand upon it. ”

we can do all we know to do, but unless the Lord blesses the endeavor, the work will fail.

One approach is to send a mission developer into a location at the request of a group of people who desire to establish a new church. In this situation the developer has some people to work with as he begins his work. He moves onto the field with the expectation of taking the existing group and expanding it. Covenant Fellowship began this way.

We have had several situations where a particular congregation will decide to establish a daughter church. The mother church supplies a good portion of the funding and usually, but not always, provides some people for the daughter congregation. Coddle Creek Church has established two daughter churches in the last 25 years- Lakeside Church on Lake Norman and Christ Church near Denver.

Occasionally there will be a group that has separated from an existing congregation who will petition to be established as a mission congregation. Depending on the size and the financial resources of such a group, their time as a mission congregation can be very short. The Reformation Church in Hendersonville is an example of this model.

There has been at least one example where an existing congregation

established a second service off-campus and nurtured that second service into a new congregation. The First Gastonia Church used this model to birth the Gaston Community Church. City Church in Greensboro is considering this approach too.



A more recent trend is for a group of churches to come together as a church planting community. The churches pool resources and cooperate together in establishing a new congregation. There are conversations of this nature currently taking place among the churches in Iredell and Alexander Counties with the Greater Hickory area as the targeted location for a new church. There has also been some interest in a group of churches from a wider area in the presbytery in pooling their resources to start a church in Fayetteville.

A group of people may begin a Bible study, and from that study, they may decide to establish a new church. The DaySpring Church in Cleveland began as a Bible study.

There have been cases where an ARP family has moved to a location that has no ARP Church, and they indicate a desire to help begin a new congregation. In connecting with friends and acquaintances, they often find other ARP families living there who are willing to be a part of the new work. We see this taking place in Johnson City, TN.

One common approach to church planting is the parachute drop. A mission developer is placed on location in an area whose demographics appear to be ripe for church planting. The mission developer

is charged with networking and making contacts within the community and developing a core group from scratch. Some of these are Ambassador in Apex, Christ Community in Greensboro, and Christ Coastal in Southport. We anticipate using this model for a new congregation in Asheville.

A multi-cultural church plant is yet another model. In such cases, a multi-cultural minister begins a work in his home. When the congregation outgrows the home, he seeks a church building to share. Once the mission leaves the minister's home, it is ready to be designated a separate congregation. Almost all of our Korean churches have started this way. Bethel Korean, Rodam Korean, and Matthews Korean (all in Charlotte) began in this way.

Church plants are not limited to areas within a geographical presbytery. There are churches being planted outside the bounds of an existing presbytery with the hope a new presbytery will be formed in the future. This location may be several states and hundreds of miles away from the nearest church. The new church can also be in a different country. We are currently involved with such an endeavor in Scotland with the Grace Leith Mission.

One of the most unique church planting approaches we have seen is that of establishing a congregation within the walls of an institution - in this case a prison. That approach did not originate from within the presbytery committee. A mission developer had the contacts, saw the need, and started a work. The Freedom Bridge Mission in the Scotland Correctional Institute in Laurinburg has seen much success.

Funding is a component to church planting. Usually some funding is provided over a three-year period from Outreach North America, presbytery, funds raised by the mission developer, and/or funds contributed by the core group.

There is no one guaranteed successful model to utilize in planting a new congregation. Not every church plant is going to be successful, but a presbytery has to be willing to explore the opportunities the Lord sends in order for those who do make it to develop into a self-sustaining congregation. All we can do is rely on the Lord of the harvest to provide the opportunities and to develop these missions into organized congregations.

# Catawba Presbytery A Burst of Activity

Catawba Presbytery has gone from no church plants to a burst of activity. This activity includes both South Carolina and Texas.



Core group, Dallas, TX

A few years ago, Dr. Sinclair Ferguson asked whether this was the right time for First Presbyterian Church in Columbia to consider planting a daughter congregation. That set things in motion. After thorough study, the session identified a place, the Pontiac area of the Northeast Columbia, and Catawba Presbytery approved.

The session used the summer 2010 Sunday School lecture series, the Thornwell Lectures, to prepare the congregation through hearing the stories of church planters who have successfully planted in various localities. The congregation gained a real life understanding of church planting. In June 2011, Brandon Barrett arrived in Columbia to plant Grace Presbyterian.

During the same time period, a group of three churches has been meeting in the Rock Hill area to form a Parenting Church Community. Tirzah, Ebenezer, and First ARP Rock Hill are working together with the goal of planting three churches in York County.

Catawba Presbytery also has called two resident evangelists to strengthen their church planting competencies and to develop the foundations for future church plants. Andy Stager is in Rock Hill, and David Winburne is in Dallas, TX.

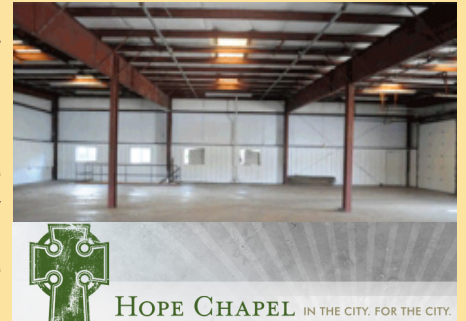
# News and Notes from the Field

Grace Church Leith, Scotland had a wonderful public launch on September 4 and actually ended up running out of seats! They made a number of new contacts and were encouraged by the positive response of non-Christian neighbors and friends who came along.



Hope Chapel in Greensboro, NC has a new rental space.

Great Commission Resources are available for free for one year for mission congregations. Contact the ONA office for more information.



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