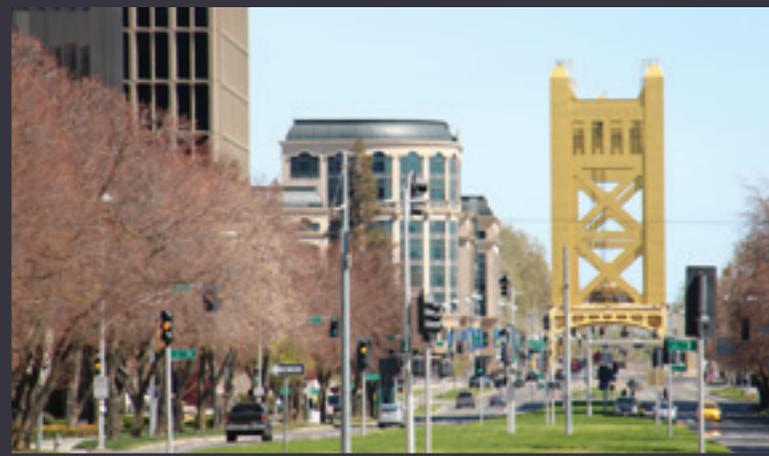




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# Flourishing Mission Churches in

“People in this state are hungry for reformed theology and expository preaching. We’re kind of in a wasteland out here,” says Tom Savage, pastor of Ridge Presbyterian Church in Paradise CA. “I want to encourage our denomination to look at the West as a ripe mission field. We need to be pointing guys to the West.”

Over the past decade, PCA presence in California’s Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area has grown rapidly. Twenty four years ago, David George moved to California to plant Valley Springs Presbyterian Church in Roseville CA. “At the time, there were eight churches and mission works in Northern California,” he recalls. Today, there are over 24 churches in the presbytery, several of them led by pastors who grew up in this region.

Traditional methods of fundraising and planting stand-alone churches don’t work as well in California, which lacks a long-standing established network of PCA churches. “Church planting is expensive and it’s hard,” says Tom. “There is widespread, generational unbelief here, and folks have no knowledge of the scriptures or the Gospel. It’s very different from growing up in the Bible Belt, for example.”



Above: Vespers in the Valley, in Chico; Below: Tom Savage, co-leading Vespers with fellow Ridge Pastor Josh Lee.



Planning committees are finding it necessary to pursue new, creative ways of establishing and funding mission works. These include multisite churches, where a team of pastors leads two or even three smaller congregations in neighboring towns; mother-daughter churches, which share resources and leadership; fostering lay-leader initiatives; and equipping native-born church planters through apprenticeship.

## Outreach & Growth in the Central Valley

Valley Springs is currently planting two churches: Vespers in the City in Sacramento and Imago Dei in Redding. “We drew a concentric circle around our church in Roseville,” says David, “and we noticed that a lot of people were traveling a long distance to come to Valley Springs. So we drew a different circle around east Sacramento and invited those people to a Sunday evening service.” David and associate pastor Troy Wilson began offering this fourth service using the facilities of Lutheran Church of the Cross in Sacramento.

“That’s been going for a year and a half now. It became the nucleus for a church plant,” says David. “Our church planter

*David George moved to California to plant Valley Springs Presbyterian Church in Roseville CA. “At the time, there were eight churches and mission works in Northern California,” he recalls. Today, there are over 24 churches in the presbytery, several of them led by pastors who grew up in the region.*

*-David George, Valley Springs Presbyterian Church*

# California's Central Valley



Vespers in the City, Sacramento

Brad Carpenter and his wife Olivia, who were previously on staff with us working with junior high youth, have been there since last September.” Vespers in the City is located amid several medical campuses and Sacramento State University.

The city of Redding is another mission church site. According to David, only 27% of people in Redding have a religious affiliation of any kind, and even fewer are members of an evangelical church. “Redding is in the northern part of the central valley. California natives Tony and Lisa Marseglia moved there this spring with plans to plant Imago Dei,” he says. “Redding is the fourth largest city in the Sacramento Valley and home to a community college, a Christian university, and a seminary.”

Last fall, Ridge Presbyterian Church in Paradise launched Vespers in the Valley in Chico, about 20 minutes to the west.

Vespers is co-led by Tom Savage and Josh Lee, pastors of Ridge in Paradise. They lead the Sunday evening service in Chico in addition to their morning service at Ridge.

“Our presbytery is asking each church to plant a church. So that’s what we did. We started with about 100 people in September 2012; it’s going great. I’m co-pastoring both churches with Josh Lee right now,” says Tom. “Once our Chico church takes root, we’re hoping in the next few years to plant another church in a nearby town. This is the way the West needs to be planting churches.” A congregation of only 200 people, Ridge Presbyterian Church is heavily involved in outreach to the surrounding area. “Paradise is a very poor region,” says Tom. “Our church helped to spearhead a homeless shelter ministry this past year, which is going extremely well. We also help coordinate three different food ministries, feeding close to 7,000 people per year. It’s been a huge blessing to our congregation. It’s not that hard and we have low overhead — it’s mostly volunteers and people giving special offerings where we need it.”

According to Tom, smaller churches may actually be better suited to doing these types of ministry. “People walk into our church office with great ideas, and since we’re small, we can more easily accomplish them. Our

elders find it very freeing to have a smaller church family and they see the value in that.”

The session is also considering starting a Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) at California State University in Chico. “We’d love to have an RUF ministry there,” says Tom. “We’re working on it and praying about how to make that happen. At this point, we hope to bring an intern out here soon, and we’ll see where the Lord takes us.”



Fresno ESL Class

David continues the region’s church planting story, “Several people were traveling from Fair Oaks to attend services at Soaring Oaks Presbyterian Church in Elk Grove (Sacramento metro area). Chad Hertzell, a ruling elder involved with the morning service, started thinking about an alternate evening service in Fair Oaks.” Coram Deo Presbyterian Church began. Attendance grew, and the service was moved to Sunday mornings. Chad has been licensed to preach in the Northern California Presbytery and is currently seeking ordination as a minister. “Coram Deo now meets at Freedom Christian School, which has provided new opportunities for good space and permanence in the community,” says David.

*“People walk into our church office with great ideas, and since we’re small, we can more easily accomplish them. Our elders find it very freeing to have a smaller church family and they see the value in that.”*

*-Tom Savage, Ridge in Paradise*



“At the heart of Central Valley, in Fresno, Sierra View Presbyterian Church had a vision for their neighboring community of Clovis,” David continues. “Seventy-three percent of people in Clovis are unchurched. They sent member Brad Mills to Reformed Seminary in Jackson MS with the intention of bringing him back to launch Grace Presbyterian Church in Clovis.” Born and raised in Fresno, Brad and his wife Carrie became involved with Sierra View about six years ago.

“Brad felt called to minister here from the time he was young,” explains Brian Peterson, pastor at Sierra View. “We sent him to seminary. After completing an internship at First Presbyterian in Jackson MS, he returned to Fresno in September 2012. During that time, the Lord stabilized our church here and increased the desire to plant a church in the valley.”

Brian has been pastor of Sierra View since 2003. Like Brad, Brian is originally from California. Brian also studied and interned in Jackson MS and then returned to the West to pastor Sierra View.

“One of the first things I did when I began pastoring here was to cast a vision for



Left: LAMP student Leonardo with Sierra View Deacon Ted Thurder

the church to duplicate what we’re doing within seven to ten years,” says Brian. “Since Brad started a two-year church planting apprenticeship with me last fall, we’re already starting to see the fruits of his labors in Clovis.”

Raising up leaders from the region is a key goal for pastors like Brian. “We’re very grateful to have guys from other parts of the country come out, and they’re doing really excellent work,” he says. “But ideally we’d like to get more guys who are native to the area, in order to increase the PCA presence in the American West. For years we’ve been pretty isolated here, but hopefully we’ll start seeing some of that change.”

Part of that vision includes training Spanish speaking leaders. Sierra View offers LAMP programs in both English and Spanish, as well as ESL classes and citizenship courses. “Fifty-four percent of the Fresno/Clovis population is Hispanic,” says Brian. “The nations have really come to us here. I can remember the session meeting where we began lifting our eyes and saw that the fields were ripe for harvest.” The church began all three outreach ministries at once.

Another way Sierra View reaches out to the community is through its prison ministry, founded by MNA Metanoia Prison Ministries Director Mark Casson. Mark came to Sierra View after spending 16 years in prison and eventually became a ruling elder. “He really opened the eyes of our church to that unreached people group, challenging us to evangelize and disciple those who are lost in the prison system,” says Brian. In addition, Sierra View is active in short term missions. This August, the church will sponsor a team to aid Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, led by outreach and missions pastor Sean Henderson.



Left: Brian Peterson, with Brad Mills



Sierra View Citizenship Class



## New Works in the San Francisco Bay Area

Grace South Bay in San Jose is a new worship site for Grace Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto. “David Jones originally came here to serve as an RUF minister at Stanford University, as a ministry of Grace Palo Alto,” explains David George. “After eight years, he left RUF to become pastor of the church. Three years ago, Grace began offering an evening service in South Bay, seeing that as a potential mission work. Bob Crossland serves as the site pastor. It has been going really well, and attendance has grown.” Last fall, Grace South Bay began meeting on Sunday mornings in their new San Jose facility.



Grace South Bay in San Jose



David Lee, pastor of New Life Mission of Fremont

multiethnic church planted in conjunction with the Korean Church Planting Network. New Life Mission is also sending out its first missionary family to Cambodia with Mission to the World.

God is at work in northern California. The Gospel is advanced as churches are launched in a growing variety of ways.



Stanford University Campus

Other new works include an upcoming church plant in San Francisco. “The presbytery has called Christopher Robins, currently in Atlanta GA, to plant that church,” says David. Grace Marin Church, led by Rod Miles, was originally a plant of City Church San Francisco. After meeting as a mission for six years, it was organized as a particular church in the fall of 2012.

Indelible Grace Presbyterian Church in Castro Valley CA, led by Michael Chung, is an independent church that is in the process of transitioning into the PCA.

David Lee, a second generation Korean, is pastor of New Life Mission of Fremont, a



Indelible Grace Church, Castro Valley.



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### INSIDE MULTIPLY FALL 2013

- OUTREACH AND GROWTH IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY
- NEW WORKS IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

## From the Coordinator

*“So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” -Isaiah 55:11*



Dear Friend,

In this issue of *Multiply*, you'll read how ordinary churches and ordinary people are accomplishing great things and expanding the Kingdom of God in Northern California. According to Tom Savage, pastor of Ridge Presbyterian Church in Paradise, California's Central Valley is

largely unchurched and filled with great need. “There is widespread spiritual and physical poverty here,” he says.

Ridge Presbyterian Church feeds about 7,000 needy people each year and also helps to operate a homeless shelter through the cold winter months. Sierra View in Fresno offers ESL classes and citizenship courses. Their LAMP program is one of the first in the nation

to offer both Spanish-speaking and English courses. Each church has new mission works underway. These are not large churches, yet the Word of the Lord is advancing into spiritually impoverished areas through them.

Your vital contributions support and equip MNA staff members and mission churches as they fulfill the Great Commission. Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support. As you read these stories, please pray for these churches, their mission works, and the people they serve. Also pray that God will raise up indigenous leaders who will hold out the hope of the Gospel to those most in need, in California's Central Valley and beyond.

In His Name,  
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator