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Reaching the Lost in the City of Philadelphia

The Philadelphia metropolitan area is home to people from every nationality and background. New mission churches bring the Gospel to these different communities through relational outreach and mercy ministries.

“Northeast Community Church is unusual because they are reaching three different language groups. They offer simultaneous worship services in English, Albanian, and Chinese — led by three different pastors,” says Bruce Finn, Metro Philadelphia Church Planting Partnership Coordinator.

Grace & Peace Community Church in South Philadelphia recently celebrated their third anniversary. “This congregation has grown by reaching the people of the community,” says Bruce. “They don’t rely on advertising, technology or print media to grow the church. They use their relational networks to draw people.”

Across the river in Sewell NJ, Mercy Hill Presbyterian Church is reaching a very



Northeast Community Church

different group of people. “Mercy Hill is a suburban church in a larger commuter community for people who work in the Philadelphia area,” says Bruce. “They face different challenges, but their method of relational outreach is the same.”

NORTHEAST COMMUNITY CHURCH - NORTHEAST PHILADELPHIA



Northeast Community English
Language Pastor Vinny Tauriello

“Northeast Philly attracts a significant number of immigrants,” says Vinny Tauriello, pastor of Northeast Community Church. Originally from Queens NY, he continues, “It’s always been a dream of mine to plant a multicultural, multilingual church. Then about five years ago, I found this small core group of believers in Northeast Philly who wanted the same thing.” Northeast Community Church offers three different worship services in English, Chinese and Albanian. The services differ in style and content, with the same Biblical text for each service.



Northeast Community Albanian
Language Pastor Jason Stryd

The people groups served are represented in the leadership of the church. Chinese American Pastor Maranatha Chung leads the Chinese congregation. Jason Stryd, a former missionary to Kosovo, and Martin Katro, an Albanian American, lead the Albanian congregation. The church has begun a monthly worship service in Arabic on Sunday afternoons, led by Dennis Blankenbeckler, an elder and former missionary to Morocco.

“We use very simple, straightforward language,” says Vinny. “Our goal is to let people know that no matter what their background or culture, the Gospel alone connects us to Christ. We want to follow Jesus and help others follow him.” The ministry includes a strong focus on prayer, missions and discipleship.

Northeast’s primary outreach is its thriving ESL program, offering classes three times a week for students of many nationalities.

Our goal is to let people know that no matter what their background or culture, the Gospel alone connects us to Christ. We want to follow Jesus and help others follow him.”

-Northeast Community Church Pastor Vinny Tauriello

Brotherly Love



Northeast Community Albanian
American Lay Leader Martin Katro

“Our main language groups are Albanian and Chinese,” says Jennifer Hogg, program coordinator. “A couple of years ago, we had an influx of Iraqi refugees, as well as other Arabic-speaking people — Moroccans, Syrians, Egyptians, and people from all over North Africa and the Middle East.” The program is staffed by 40 volunteers from local partner churches, and also offers child-care. Each week 150 adults attend; 150 more are on a waiting list.

About half of enrolled students are Muslim. There has been a surprising ability to connect between Christians and Muslims. “The Muslims coming to our school are very intent on their faith and are very moral,” says Jen. “For example, Muslims love to pray, and



Northeast Community Chinese
Language Pastor Maranatha Chung

they appreciate it when we pray for them. Our struggle is how to share the Gospel in a way that won’t make them leave,” she adds. One solution they discovered is that students volunteer to read a Bible verse at the beginning of each class, printed out in eight different languages. Including verses that mention Jesus and key Gospel themes has proven a great way to get past some of the barriers to the Gospel.

“What we’re doing is really missionary work,” says Vinny. “Instead of us going to the nations, God has sent them here.” Adds



Northeast ESL is led by Jen Hogg (right),
standing is MNA ESL Trainer Barb Cober

Jen, “I think we’re seeing the reality that ‘they will know us by our love.’ One of the most amazing times is when we all get together in a multilingual service. It’s just like heaven, with all the nations there, praising the Lord.”

GRACE & PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH - SOUTH PHILADELPHIA

Ten years ago, Jonathan Olsen and his family moved into South Philly, about eight blocks from where he worked on the pastoral staff at Tenth Presbyterian Church. “While walking just those eight blocks from home to Tenth, I felt like I was leaving my natural mission field to serve in a more professional

ministry setting,” says Jonathan, who now pastors Grace & Peace Community Church. Neighbors would say, ‘If you start a church down here, we’ll go visit, but we’re not gonna walk into Center City.’ Other people on my block told me, ‘I don’t believe in God, I certainly don’t believe in Jesus, but you’re our pastor.’ The Lord was tugging on our hearts to pray about planting a church in our neighborhood,” says Jonathan.

Jonathan started a prayer meeting and a Sunday School class to assess interest. “I was coaching baseball, spending time on the streets outside my house. We found a little storefront property. We had cookouts. We set up the speaker system outside, out on the streets. After three years, we grew enough to need the space offered by a YMCA across from our house. It was crazy. I’m preaching Christ and baptizing people on one side of a basketball court while guys were playing ball on the other side.”

Grace & Peace now occupies a large warehouse in the neighborhood. The congregation reflects the diversity of the area. “Two of those who came to faith in Christ were hard dudes, addicted to drugs, and they both died within the past year. Our church held the funerals, and the love of Christ has



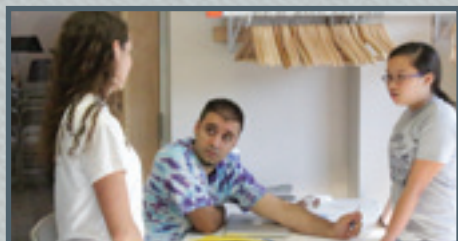
Grace & Peace pastor Jonathan Olsen



been blowing people away. There have been some really intense ways that God has used that to bring people into the congregation. It's highly relational, but also really draining sometimes, because doing ministry this way takes a lot of energy," Jonathan admits.

"As a Christian minister and a missionary, I'm looking for the misfits — the last, least, and lost"

-Phil Henry, Mercy Hill Pastor



Grace & Peace Camp Coordinator Joey Sinagra

Grace & Peace runs a thriving summer day camp for neighborhood children, led this past summer by camp coordinator Joey Sinagra. Church members also coordinate and lead home Bible study groups as well as an after-school tutoring ministry. Explains Jonathan, "Our ministry is definitely lay driven. My job is really about equipping the saints to do the work of ministry. They are the ones doing it. All I do is shepherd and cast the vision and disciple folks."

MERCY HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

"South Jersey is where people go to get away from the city," says Pastor Phil Henry, who began Mercy Hill Presbyterian in September 2010. "They buy a 'McMansion' with a yard and a marble statue out front. It's very suburban, traditional and closed to outsiders. Evangelicals comprise 3–5% of the population. There are more millionaires per capita in New Jersey than anywhere else in the states. Most of them are agnostic, atheist,

Jewish, or mainline Roman Catholic. And none of them are looking to change. New Jersey is a great desert in terms of faith."

"But the Gospel is the heart of the Kingdom," Phil continues, "which makes this community ripe for missions work." One of Mercy Hill's core commitments is to encourage members to become "ordinary missionaries" in the places they live, work and play. Mercy ministry is a large part of that.

When Phil arrived, he discovered that charity is already an integral part of South Jersey culture. "Many people here do nice things for people — helping people, volunteering at the food drive or the shelter, collecting winter coats for the homeless. People take off weekends to go do something nice for somebody. We had to be active in mercy

ministry just to be part of the conversation. What's different is why we do it. Not to pay God back or because we feel bad, but because it's our joyful response to Jesus' finished work. We try to focus on needs that other people aren't addressing."



Mercy Hill Leadership Group in prayer



Mercy Hill Pastor Phil Henry (left) enjoying R&R time with members of the church and community

"As a Christian minister and a missionary," Phil says, "I'm looking for the misfits — the last, least, and lost — who are overlooked or fall through the cracks. We want to find people who are not in church, who don't believe in God, or who have lost their faith. If you want to roll up your sleeves; get dirty; rearrange your schedule, money, time, and priorities so that your lost neighbors can actually see and taste that the Lord is good by what they see in your life, then this is the church for you"



HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF UPDATE

Because it is close to Philadelphia, Atlantic City has a special place in the hearts of Philadelphia area churches. Disaster relief efforts underway following Hurricane Sandy (October 2012) received a boost this past summer as urban ministry teams (UMTs) working with New City Fellowship of Atlantic City and Hope for Atlantic City came in each week to clean out and rebuild devastated houses. With over 200 volunteers, teams from many Northeast and Southeast PCA churches completed renovations on some houses in the area and began work on several more. During September, MNA SecondCareer organized a two-week work outreach project by mobilizing their new Recreation Vehicle Owners Ministry Group to assist in the Atlantic City recovery operation.



There is still a great need for renovating and rebuilding homes. New City Fellowship Pastor Santo Garofala especially emphasizes the opportunity for skilled laborers to join with other volunteers and the people of the community in the ongoing rebuilding of homes.

Funds given by PCA churches have provided for the employment of two staff members from the community. "David Preston worked for the Atlantic County Improvement Authority for 30 years and was laid off. We were able to call him as our construction manager," says Santo. "He organizes UMT Sandy relief efforts and schedules, oversees the work, and orders materials." New City also called Keashia Hamlett to work in office support. "Keashia's house in the Bunglaow Park area of the city was affected by Sandy," says Santo, "so it's been a blessing to them and to us to have people from the community work with us."

How is your church reaching out to the many different people of your community?

Do these churches reflect ministry that you might consider? Find more information on these churches and ministries here:

Disaster Relief in Atlantic City & other areas
pcamna.org/disaster-response/storms

Northeast Community Church
nccphilly.org

Grace & Peace Community Church
graceandpeacecommunitychurch.blogspot.com

Mercy Hill Presbyterian Church
mercyhillnj.squarespace.com

MNA ESL
pcamna.org/esl

MNA SecondCareer
pcamna.org/secondcareer

Our new Donor Management Portal will give you the ability to control your giving and donor information securely and at your convenience! <https://secure.pcanet.org/mna/donate/index.php>

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From the Coordinator

“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” — John 13:34-35



Dear Friend,

In this issue of *Multiply*, you'll read about several church planters working in the Philadelphia area. Populated with people of every ethnicity and background, Philadelphia has not always been renowned for its brotherly love. But these church planters are bringing God's love to lost, lonely and hurting people.

At Northeast Community Church, pastor Vinnie Tauriello is working alongside Maranatha Chung and Jason Stryd to preach and minister to Chinese and Albanian immigrants in their own languages. Their ESL program connects the church to the community in a unique way, drawing 150 students each week. You'll hear from Northeast Community Church's ESL Coordinator Jennifer Hogg

about how teachers navigate cultural differences in order to share the love of Jesus with Muslim students.

In South Philly, Jonathan Olsen is growing his congregation through an emphasis on interpersonal relationships and lay driven ministry. This past summer over 50 neighborhood kids were involved in their summer day camp, which was coordinated and staffed by volunteers. You'll also read about Mercy Hill Presbyterian, a mission church located across the river in South Jersey. Pastor Phil Henry has found that when ministering in a largely secular and suburban context, the Gospel is no less compelling than in the center city.

Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support for these church planters and other mission works across North America. You are joining in the work of the Kingdom, as God continues to draw the lost to Himself.

In His Name,
Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator