

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN ROCHESTER AND ORLANDO

*plus* NEW CITY NETWORK: SUPPORTING CROSSCULTURAL MINISTRY IN THE PCA



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN ROCHESTER AND ORLANDO

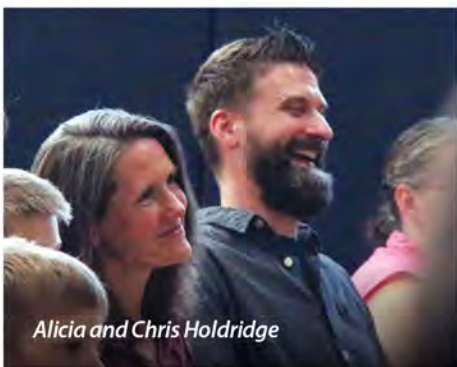
Sitting on the shore of Lake Ontario with a population of about 210,000, Rochester NY has been in decline since the 1980s, when the two largest employers, Kodak and Xerox, began losing their more than 100,000 employees, declining to fewer than 10,000 today. “Per capita, the city of Rochester has

one of the highest rates of poverty in the nation,” said PCA Grace Church Pastor Marc Swan. “The need for urban renewal is staggering.”



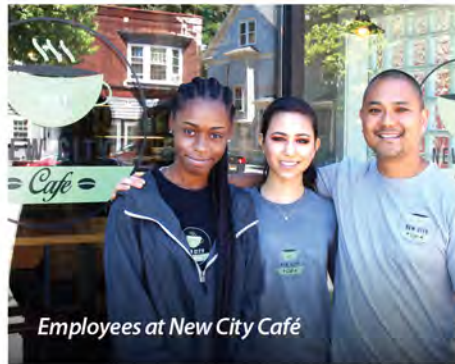
Marc Swan

Rochester native Chris Holdridge, a public school teacher and a Grace Church elder, had a heart for urban work. The church supported Chris and his wife Alicia in beginning 441 Ministries in Beechwood, a low-income multiethnic community in



Alicia and Chris Holdridge

Rochester. 441 Ministries focuses on youth, children, and families; offering gardening, summer VBS-style programs, job training and job experience at New City Café, along with Christian discipleship and mentoring.



Employees at New City Café

As Chris and Alicia served their community, they raised their four boys and Chris completed seminary through RTS/Orlando’s distance learning program, all while living in Beechwood. A decade after starting 441 Ministries, Holdridge was ordained and launched New City Fellowship Beechwood with the participation of 20 members of Grace Church.

While generously supporting these Beechwood initiatives, Grace Church was meeting in a school and was actively searching for a church building. Grace decided instead to do a capital campaign to buy the building for 441 ministries. Three years later in 2015, God supplied a building for Grace as well, and in 2016 New City Fellowship launched. “It says a



Grace Church building

lot about God’s work in the hearts of the members of Grace Church – a hard-working, generous bunch of people who follow God’s leading in sharing a vision for church planting. Some are already asking where we will plant next,” said Swan.

New opportunities for ministry abound for New City. Around 40 families from Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Congo have moved into



New City Fellowship Congregation

Beechwood and nearby city communities. Holdridge also is committed to training other pastors for this kind of ministry.

PER CAPITA, THE CITY OF ROCHESTER HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF POVERTY IN THE NATION. THE NEED FOR URBAN RENEWAL IS STAGGERING.

—Marc Swan



## “THE TEAM DECIDED, ‘LET’S JUST DO SOMETHING.’ WE STARTED PLAYING VOLLEYBALL AT THE CHURCH PROPERTY AND INVITED NEIGHBORS TO JOIN AND PLAY.”

—*Marc Swan*

This summer, RTS/Jackson seminary student Alex Wright interned at New City. “Alex is working in our children’s program, our daily lunch program, shadowing me, and helping with preaching. It’s a blessing to us and great ministry experience for him,” said Holdridge.

Seeking a greater ministry in their own church neighborhood, Grace Church named an outreach team to guide the congregation. “4,000 people within one mile of our



church don’t claim any religion,” said Swan. “The team decided, ‘Let’s just do something.’ We started playing volleyball at the church property and invited neighbors to join the play.” Afghani refugees from the apartment complex down the street did just that. They had come to America through a non-sectarian group No One Left Behind, which relocates translators and drivers who worked with the U.S. military and are now at risk in their country.

“The men knew English but their wives did not. Our church started hosting ESL

classes to meet their need,” said Swan. “No One Left Behind runs the class, while our church moms love on the refugee children. One or two of the ESL families – all of whom are Muslim – have accepted dinner invitations from church families. Friendships are growing.”

The outreach team also started Grace Community Garden on the church property. “Our congregants work the garden alongside community members and are planning a harvest party at the end of the season to share food and recipes,” said Swan. Christmas caroling and invitations to the church Christmas service provide additional well-received connections with neighbors.



Grace’s story shows what can happen when a church seeks God’s leading in meeting the ever-changing needs of neighbors. “Just in our county, almost 400,000 people call themselves ‘unclaimed,’ not affiliated with any religion. We are living in a mission field. Imagine if Grace planted 50 churches with 200 people in each. Still, only 2.5% of that

mission field would be reached. The need is huge,” said Swan.

There is no PCA church in Albany, the state capital, and the presbytery is one of the smaller ones in the PCA. “We don’t have a lot of money, but we have a lot of love, and we will do everything we can to support church planters,” said Swan. “This is a wonderful presbytery. We’ve got each other’s backs and need each other. We need more guys to come up here to plant rural, suburban, and urban churches.”

### DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN ORLANDO FL

Orlando FL stands in complete contrast to Rochester in region, climate, population and economic growth, yet the call for churches to serve in several of the urban communities is the same. Christ United Fellowship is a multiethnic mission church in Orlando, led



by Pastor Michael Aitcheson, who was called by the presbytery after graduating from RTS/Orlando. “I am a bicultural kid – Jamaican and African American,”

said Aitcheson. “I grew up in Miami and was aware of racial struggles. Crosscultural relationships were a normal part of life. My wife, Lucy, is a white lady from Birmingham AL where there is layered tension.”



Christ United is committed to Christ-centered preaching, hospitality, and serving their diverse community. “We have a unique community here in Orlando. It’s a giant suburb with a city in the middle. You could call it a giant small town. Our schools are as diverse as it gets – from affluent, to underserved, to white, black, Latino, Asian,” said Aitcheson.

Aitcheson stresses that their core values are Christ-centered preaching, hospitality, and service to the community. From community small groups, to cookouts, to fun nights, to church leadership partnering with local organizations, Christ United is giving to their community. The church frequently partners with other churches. The church focuses on schools as an intentional way of reaching their community. “We have developed a strong relationship with the local school where we meet. The principal is an African American Latina woman who is bilingual, bicultural, and a believer, who welcomes

our partnership. We are relational in word and deed, and we love on this school in any way possible. We reach families through the school,” said Aitcheson.

Christ United Fellowship started a partnership with Campus Outreach students for 8 weeks in the summer, providing local opportunities for them at local churches with a focus on crosscultural training. Starting a diverse church isn’t without challenge. “When we say that we are a ‘diverse’ church, that can mean a host of things to people. We have to clarify what we mean and what we don’t mean, and help people



*New members joining the church*

understand what we are capable of doing and what we are not capable of doing,” said Aitcheson. “When we talk about diversity at Christ United, we think about it biblically, culturally, and from personal situations. The Bible communicates to us that God is redeeming a diverse people. Since our nation is becoming more diverse, crosscultural ministry is critical.”

“We are not afraid to talk about our differences with each other, and work to do so with love, while listening and learning from each other’s stories. I am friends with a local white pediatrician, Michael Middleton, and we’ve gone to conferences together to



*Christ United Congregation*

engage in discussions on diversity and racial reconciliation together,” said Aitcheson. “We have a church that is politically diverse and that comes out in different discussions. We have decided to move headlong into it and learn to listen, not to persuade each other, but to understand each other. Despite all the things that tend to compartmentalize us, the gospel and our faith in Christ is the core to our unity,” said Aitcheson. “The gospel is what brings us together and God’s call to share the gospel is what sends us out.”

**WE ARE NOT AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT OUR DIFFERENCES WITH EACH OTHER, AND WORK TO DO SO WITH LOVE, WHILE LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER’S STORIES.**

**—Michael Aitcheson**

# NEW CITY NETWORK

“THE PEOPLE WE'RE REACHING KNOW LITTLE ABOUT THE GOSPEL... THOSE ARE THE PEOPLE WE WANT TO REACH, BUT IT TAKES LONGER TO TRAIN CHURCH LEADERSHIP.”

—Randy Nabors

**T**he New City Network is a growing association of urban and crosscultural churches and ministries that encourage and support crosscultural ministry throughout the PCA. Randy Nabors served for 36 years as pastor of New City Fellowship, an urban, crosscultural church in Chattanooga TN. With his wife Joan as his ministry partner, Randy currently serves as MNA Urban and Mercy Ministries Coordinator and New City Network Director.



Randy Nabors

As a pastor, Randy was often asked to assist others in starting crosscultural churches. As the number of these churches grew, the pastors wanted something to help hold them together. In 2010, the New City Network was formed, and in 2012 Randy and Joan Nabors began to work full time with MNA to build up the Network. Nabors says the churches are urban, crosscultural, include the poor, have joyful worship, and provide sound biblical teaching. Most are PCA churches.

The Network includes and interacts with churches and ministries in more than 80 cities. The growth of these churches is challenging. “It takes 10 years to become self-supporting. When serving a poor population, church planters need longer-term support compared to those serving in middle class communities. It can be slow going and requires creativity,” said Nabors. “Most of the people we’re reaching know little about the gospel and nothing about the Presbyterian tradition. Those are the people we want to reach, but it takes longer to train church leadership.”

The New City Network invites youth groups to serve in hands-on ministry in Chattanooga. “Every summer, 500 kids from churches all over North America experience the crosscultural church in action. After 33 years, that’s a lot of people,” said Nabors. “Often when



New City Cross Cultural Music & Worship Conference. Director James Ward (left) with Daniel Young, Assistant Music Director at New City Fellowship.

I visit a city someone will say something to me like, “You don’t know me, but my life changed when I came to do crosscultural ministry in Chattanooga one summer, and now I’m an inner-city teacher.”

Ministry to and through refugee and immigrant individuals and families is growing. “Immigrants and refugees are trained in our churches here. Some then go back to their home countries, such as Congo, Togo, Kenya, England, and other countries, to serve or start churches there.



New City musicians provided music for the New City Music Conference

In addition to their pastoral ministry with the Network churches, Randy and Joan assist with events the Network sponsors, including a January Reconciliation and Justice Conference hosted by New City Fellowship in St. Louis MO; an Urban Minister Training Institute in May in Chattanooga; the New City Cross Cultural Music and Worship Conference every other year; and a New City Network Leader’s Summit pastors and wives attend together.

To learn more, visit [thenewcitynetwork.org](http://thenewcitynetwork.org) or [The New City Network on Facebook](#).

MNA serves PCA churches and presbyteries as they advance God’s Kingdom in North America by planting, growing, and multiplying biblically healthy churches through the development of intentional evangelism and outreach ministries. For a list of MNA staff, visit our website at [www.pcamna.org](http://www.pcamna.org). Material in *Multiply* may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to: Fred Marsh, Managing Editor, Writing and design provided by Big Bridge, Asheville, NC ([thebigbridge.com](http://thebigbridge.com)). *Multiply* is published by MNA. [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) Find us at [facebook.com/pcamna](https://facebook.com/pcamna), [twitter.com/pcamna](https://twitter.com/pcamna) & [linkedin.com/company/mission-to-north-america](https://linkedin.com/company/mission-to-north-america)

1700 North Brown Rd. • Suite 101 • Lawrenceville, GA 30043 • P: 678.825.1200 • F: 678.825.1201 • [mna@pcanet.org](mailto:mna@pcanet.org) • [www.pcamna.org](http://www.pcamna.org)



Mission to North America  
Presbyterian Church in America

1700 N. Brown Road, Suite 101  
Lawrenceville GA 30043  
T: 678.825.1200 • F: 678.825.1201  
[www.pcamna.org](http://www.pcamna.org)

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
MONTGOMERY, AL  
PERMIT NO. 312

## INSIDE MULTIPLY WINTER 2018

- COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN ROCHESTER AND ORLANDO  
**TWO CHURCHES ENGAGING WITH NEIGHBORS IN THEIR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**
- NEW CITY NETWORK  
**SUPPORTING CROSSCULTURAL MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE PCA**

## From the Coordinator

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” -**John 20:21**



Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas from Mission to North America! This season gives space for us to contemplate and long for Christ’s return, even as we celebrate and rejoice in his first coming. Now is a time for wonder: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for us (John 3:16). In the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, to be born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem

us out from under the guilt and judgment that the law exposes in our lives, and to claim us as his own adopted children (Galatians 4:4-5). Hallelujah, what a Savior!

And this is a time for mission. How do we best honor Jesus’ first coming, while readying ourselves for his return? By carrying for-

ward the incarnation of Christ, by engaging the mission of living and sharing the gospel that he has entrusted to us. We are sent by Jesus, even as the Father sent him: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). This is the season for reveling in the shalom of God that is ours in Christ and for sharing it with the communities surrounding us. These stories inside *Multiply*—from Rochester NY, Orlando FL, and all across the New City Network—lead the way for us in bringing the peace of Christ in word and deed to an increasingly diverse world, a world as needy for God’s love and forgiveness as it always has been. As BB Warfield preached years ago, may we imitate Jesus in his incarnation this Christmas, lovingly moving into the communities around us, engaging sacrificially and joyfully, carrying the good news of Jesus with us, that North America and the world may be changed forever! Amen.

Paul Hahn  
MNA Coordinator