

# MNA MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

MNA DISASTER RESPONSE / ENGAGING DISABILITY WITH THE GOSPEL / MNA METANOIA PRISON MINISTRIES





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)

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## INSIDE MULTIPLY WINTER 2019-20

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## From the Coordinator

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.... —**Ephesians 2:4-5**



alive together with him (Ephesians 2:4-5; Galatians 4:4).

The mercies of God were on great display in Christ's birth, as the old hymn notes: "Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King! Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." As John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' first appearing on the scene, he proclaimed a message of salvation and forgiveness of sins, because of the tender mercy

of our God (Luke 1:78). And now, as we prepare for Christ's return, we remember that we have received his mercy and we are his people (I Peter 2:10). We live by mercy alone.

Living between these times of Jesus' coming and his return means living as people of his mercy, sharing widely around us the forgiveness of God in Christ with others, the love that lifts them out of their misery, even as God has shared it with us in Jesus. Our mission as Christ's church is to multiply the mercies of God that we have been given in him. In this issue of *Multiply*, you encounter beautiful expressions of sharing gospel mercy through a number of MNA ministries—Disaster Response, Metanoia Prison Ministries, and Engaging Disability With The Gospel. In this season, and in the New Year ahead, may you be inspired by these stories and consider how you and your congregation can engage in missional partnerships like these, to become people who are ever growing rich in mercy, even as our Lord is! Amen.

Paul Hahn  
MNA Coordinator

# MNA DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo by Andrea Thomas.

*Mission to North America (MNA) partners with PCA churches and presbyteries to advance God's kingdom in the United States and Canada. In this issue, we look at how three MNA Missional Partnerships—MNA Disaster Response, MNA Metanoia Prison Ministries and Engaging Disability With The Gospel—engage with churches and presbyteries for the advancement of the gospel. As Christians, we are called to express God's mercy, loving our neighbors because God first loved us and gave his son for us. In these three stories we witness God's call to serve those who live in challenging circumstances.*

**O**n October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael devastated Panama City FL. The Cat Five 161 mph winds hit the city midday, tearing off roofs, cutting trees in half and tossing trucks and cars into the air like toys. Fifty-nine people died in the US and 15 in Central America. Damages in the US exceeded 25 billion dollars.

Three PCA churches were in Michael's direct path: First Presbyterian Church (FPC), Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC) and Panama City Korean Church (PCKC). These 3 churches, along with the houses and



CPC Deacon James Thompson with Sheds of Hope. Photo by Andrea Thomas.

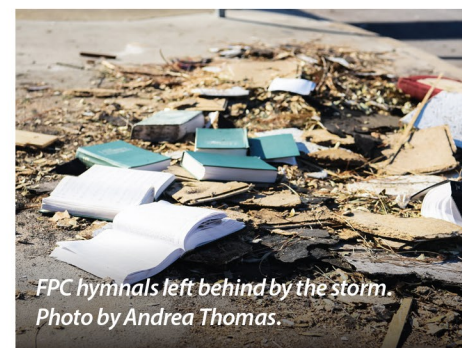
businesses of church members, sustained significant damages. First Presbyterian Church's buildings suffered over 8 million in damages, the largest single loss ever incurred in the PCA.

Within hours of the storm, Pastor Ron Brown was contacted by Bruce Cullen of

Gulf Coast Presbytery. Bruce and his team, equipped with an MNA Disaster Response trailer, had been preparing as a presbytery. Within 72 hours they were making 400 meals a day, along with offering prayers and encouragement to their brothers and sisters and their neighbors, in all three churches.

Pastor Cory Colravv of CPC remembers driving through town with his son two days after the storm, "It looked like something from World War II; everything was strewn everywhere; to see the destruction of the community, our church, church school and houses was devastating emotionally, but our Elders and Deacons stepped right up and led, making sure everyone was accounted for and coordinating response to everyone's needs."

MNA Disaster Response Director Arklie Hooten along with Keith Perry, MNA Disaster Response Specialist, Florida, arrived



FPC hymnals left behind by the storm. Photo by Andrea Thomas.

within five days of the disaster. As Pastor Brown says, "They rallied the denomination troops. Teams of volunteers started

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**—Pastor Cory Colravv**



## “WHEN A DISASTER IS LARGER THAN A CHURCH OR PRESBYTERY CAN HANDLE, OUR JOB IS TO COME IN AND CARRY THE LOAD FOR A WHILE—THROUGH VOLUNTEERS FROM CHURCHES ALL ACROSS THE PCA—UNTIL EVERYONE GETS BACK ON THEIR FEET.

—MNA Disaster Response Director Arklie Hooten

arriving from all over the country. This was the best of grassroots operations, equipping and facilitating mission teams from all over to do the work. MNA has been a bright spot; we saw the best of the PCA in terms of its organizational structure for disaster response. Their leadership is about coordinating local churches and individuals to come together to help.”

Zadok Hong, Pastor at PCKC, said that many MNA volunteers went to the homes of church members to help with clean-up. He added, “The most wonderful thing was that before the MNA teams started their daily job, they prayed for God’s blessing on families and encouraged them. PCKC members realized the important role of our brothers in faith. MNA’s John Browne led many volunteers in building Sheds of Hope for our church members.”

Looking back now, Cory recalls, “We saw how God takes care of us. We tend to worry about this and that in our lives, but if he cared for us in our time of devastation, certainly he will also care for us in normal times. It sort of exposes the foolishness of our worry!”

Now over a year after the hurricane, much remains to be done. A new roof for FPC’s sanctuary and adjacent Sunday school wing is under construction. Many church families are still renting or living in trailers because their homes remain uninhabitable.

Arklie Hooten explains MNA’s assistance, “When a disaster is larger than a church or presbytery can handle, our job is to come in and carry the load for a while—through volunteers from churches all across the PCA—until everyone gets back on their feet. We run on the gospel fuel of love-driven sacrifice. Every day we pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.”

Over a thousand miles from Panama City in Pembroke NH, Christ Church PCA had been praying about establishing a greater connection with their community, wanting a sustainable outreach ministry for Pembroke. When they heard about the disaster in Panama City, the church sent a team of seven, 5 from their church and 2 from other churches, to help with the cleanup. It was



After the storm, members from FPC, CPC and PCKC gathered often to support one another.

in Panama City, ministering and serving, that God led them to their outreach ministry back home.

God’s people at Christ Church have begun a new ministry to serve their neighbors by making emergency home repairs, undertaking small construction projects such as building ramps for the disabled, and neighborhood clean-up. Recently they were awarded an MNA Disaster Response Trailer. Christ Church Pastor Ian Hard concludes, “We didn’t need to create a new ministry from scratch; MNA already had resources and training in place. People joining the church are excited about what we are doing. Others in our congregation who have been on the fringes are now engaging; this has provided a broader avenue for everyone, helping the entire church see the blessing of God through our denomination.”



Damage to Panama City Korean Church.

# ENGAGING DISABILITY WITH THE GOSPEL

**D**eveloping relationships with others who have similar backgrounds and interests is easy and natural. Diversity challenges our attempts to build strong relationships. Consider the diversity of people with differing cognitive abilities, language deficits, or lack of social skills. Disability, as one form of diversity, provides us an opportunity to be part of God's work of renewal and growth.



*Grace Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis IN. Going over an adult Bible study lesson.*

MNA Engaging Disability With The Gospel is on the forefront of encouraging congregations to embrace and enfold children, teens, and adults with disabilities into church body life. It is estimated that only 1 in 10 families who are impacted by disability continue in regular church attendance, largely due to the physical, relational, intellectual, and spiritual barriers they face at church.

Adults with traumatic brain injuries often find friendships challenging. Seniors with dementia may not be able to remain active in Bible studies. Young adults with cognitive impairments may find it difficult to assimilate into adult ministries when their peers leave for college. And families who have children with autism often face challenges in overcoming the misconception that difficult behavior is intentional disobedience. Yet all of these people want to grow in grace and friendships in their PCA churches—just like we all do.

MNA Engaging Disability With The Gospel Director Ashley Belknap explains, "Our goal for people touched by disability is that they are not just present in church, but that they are thriving both spiritually and relationally." Engaging Disability comes alongside individuals with disabilities, their families, and their congregations to provide the needed adaptations and accommodations to enable assimilation, growth, and church-wide renewal.

Emphasizing the mutual gain for both the person with disabilities and those who love them well, Ashley says, "Enfolding people with disabilities into your church will change the way your church loves and serves others in Christ. Diversity in the body of Christ



*Enjoying fellowship at a conference by Engaging Disability With The Gospel.*

is so good for our own hearts and spiritual growth. It causes us to know God more fully and to see the way Christ works in us and through us more vividly."

Every church has children, teens, and adults with disabilities. Get to know them, invite them to your home, step toward them with friendship, and be prepared for God to change you and your church as a result.



*Special Needs Class for children at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia PA.*

“ENFOLDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INTO YOUR CHURCH WILL CHANGE THE WAY YOUR CHURCH LOVES AND SERVES OTHERS IN CHRIST. DIVERSITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST IS SO GOOD FOR OUR OWN HEARTS AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH. IT CAUSES US TO KNOW GOD MORE FULLY AND TO SEE THE WAY CHRIST WORKS IN US AND THROUGH US MORE VIVIDLY.”

—Engaging Disability Director Ashley Belknap

# MNA METANOIA PRISON MINISTRIES

...TO SEE PEOPLE GROW FROM A LIFESTYLE OF SIN TO BEING TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST HAS REALLY AMAZED ME.

—Brent Andersen

**M**NA Metanoia Prison Ministries' mission is to partner with churches for evangelism, discipleship and reintegration of prisoners, taking the gospel to inmates through sound reformed biblical teaching. *Metanoia* is the New Testament Greek word for repentance. The ministry emphasizes the need to turn from a life of sin to a life lived for the glory of God.

Brent Andersen, an elder at Christ Covenant in Matthews NC (Charlotte metro area), has been corresponding with prisoners through Metanoia for over five years now. "We have this picture of really hardened men and women in prison fighting all the time, but I've gotten to know some really Godly men. To see people grow

from a lifestyle of sin to being transformed by Christ has really amazed me."

### **Church members volunteer their service in three ways:**

**1. Discipleship:** a one-to-one ministry through which anyone at any age or stage in life may disciple a prisoner from home. Metanoia provides biblically reformed correspondence courses created specifically for prisoners. The prisoner-student is matched with a church member who grades the completed coursework and provides feedback. Prisoners may go many years without any contact from the outside world. Metanoia gives church members a safe and secure way to provide fellowship and spiritual support to those who need it most.

**2. Mentors:** when the prisoner completes the first two courses, he or she qualifies to have a mentor. Mentors visit the prisoner at least twice a month. They teach life skills needed for reentry to society, such as how to be a biblical husband and parent, managing finances and other Christian and everyday life skills.

**3. Reintegration:** when a prisoner is ready for parole, a church near the prison comes alongside, praying with the prisoner and helping set up a parole plan to reintegrate the prisoner into society.



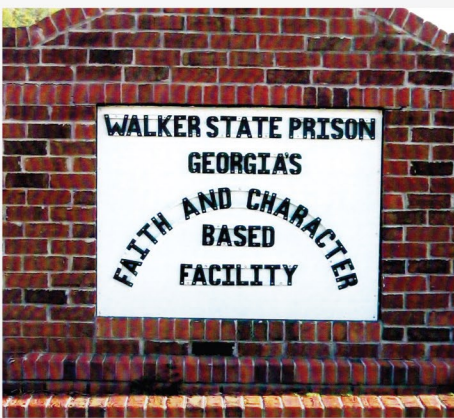
Metanoia mentors John Agnew and his wife (middle and right) with a prisoner.

There are currently 1.53 million men and women in prison in the United States. When a prisoner is paroled or released 60—66% will commit another crime and return to prison within five years. When a prisoner professes in God, the return rate to prison falls to 30%.

MNA Metanoia Prison Ministries Director Mark Casson spent 15 years in prison himself. He believes "personal discipleship and mentoring help prisoners understand that their life has value and they are created in God's image. There are prisoners awaiting help because we can't find enough Christians on the outside to volunteer. Pray for more Gospel harvest workers."

...as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

—Matthew 25:40



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](https://www.facebook.com/pcamna) [t](https://www.twitter.com/pcamna) [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mission-to-north-america) Find us at [facebook.com/pcamna](https://www.facebook.com/pcamna), [twitter.com/pcamna](https://www.twitter.com/pcamna) & [linkedin.com/company/mission-to-north-america](https://www.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)