

## Evangelism, Church Growth & Development (Revitalization and REC100)

To the 144th Council of the Diocese of the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic of the Reformed Episcopal Church:

*Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep (Ps 127:1-2).*

**1. Our Purpose.** The purpose of this committee is to offer assistance, advice, and encouragement to Rectors and Vicars who desire to see their parishes or missions grow, as well as to assist those who are called to the important work of church planting.

**2. A Sampling of Works-in-Progress.** Looking back over this past year, there are a few works-in-progress to report upon (and doubtless there are others of which I am not aware):

(2a) English as a Second Language Ministry at St. Luke's. This ministry began a year and a half ago as an effort to reach out to the neighborhood around St. Luke's. Chris and Naomi Morris (parishioners at nearby St. Mark's REC) lead this ministry, assisted by volunteers from St. Mark's and St. Luke's.

About 40 students attend each Saturday morning. There are 3 levels of instruction being offered: Beginners 1, Beginners 2, and Advanced. Of the students regularly in attendance, about 50% hail from a Spanish speaking country. (If God were to call a Spanish-speaking church planter to this work, it might be possible to establish a Spanish mission out of this group.) The other 50% come from a wide variety of places such as China, Haiti, and West Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Seneca mainly).

This is an example of a front porch ministry whose objective is both to show God's love to a vulnerable segment of our population, and also to establish relationships for the sake of the Christ and his Kingdom. Each session begins in prayer, and ends with the reading of a Psalm, along with a short reflection/lesson. Invitations to worship at St. Lukes are distributed weekly in 8 languages.



This ministry is greatly in need of additional volunteers (if you speak English and have a heart for “the least of these” – you’re qualified!). Chris Morris sends out weekly updates (to receive them, write him: [cnmorris5@verizon.net](mailto:cnmorris5@verizon.net)).

(2b) Chinese Mission. This church-plant initiative began just over 1 year ago. About 40 people join us each Sunday for a worship service at 1:30pm. On the first Sunday of each month the 10am service at St. Mark's is in English and Chinese, following which there is a joint potluck lunch. In addition, we gather for a prayer meeting (with homily) on Tuesday evenings, choir practice on Wednesday evenings, and a Bible Study on Friday evenings (these all take place at St. Luke's).

The Lord be with you. 主與你同在。  
**And with thy spirit. 也與你的靈同在。**  
 Lift up your hearts. 敞開你們的心扉。  
**We lift them up unto the Lord. 我們向主敞開心扉。**

Some of the members of this group joined us from an Independent Chinese congregation, and others are joining us by way of evangelism and conversion. In January of this year 18 people were Baptized (mostly adults, though with a few youths – it was amazing to see entire multi-generational households being baptized, with ages ranging from 80 years old to 7 years old). The following day 30 were Confirmed. To provide for future leadership, we are currently in the early stages of preparing 2 aspirants for postulancy.



Adults & Children coming to the font

This ministry is being funded by the tithes and offerings of the group itself. In addition, we are grateful to Bp. Gillin for allowing some REC100 funds to be used to provide training and ongoing coaching for John Liu, who is the lead planter.

We suffered a serious setback this summer when John's trip to China, which was meant to be 1 month long, was (and is) unexpectedly lengthened. Please pray fervently that John is able to return to us soon. As a result of John's absence, I have taken over most of the pastoral responsibilities while simultaneously catechizing and training an assistant (Luke Wu, a PhD student (ABD) at Puritan Seminary who desires to enter the REC) to assist in an interim capacity.



Please pray for John, Lillian, and their children (Maggie and Aaron)

(2c) Good Shepherd RE Mission (Harrisburg, Pa) is a growing church plant under the leadership of Fr. R. McCarl (Vicar). Fr. McCarl writes: "In September of this year we made an offer to purchase St. Matthias Lutheran Church from the lower Susquehanna Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Negotiations followed and in October our offer was accepted. Closing on the building will take place on December 31, 2024 pending a building inspection. The members of Good Shepherd Anglican Mission hope to have their first worship service in the new building on the feast of the Epiphany 2025."

*(2d) Bishop Cummins RE Church* (Catonsville, Md) has been working towards revitalization, mainly utilizing the “REVIVE” strategy devised by the Director of Church Revitalization and Coaching for the American Anglican Council, Canon Eldridge. Bp. Cummins Church hosted a seminar led by Eldridge, and are in the process of devising and implementing new strategies for the greater health and growth of the church. (An example of a front porch ministry being planned for this Spring is “GriefShare”, which is a 13-week support group for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.)

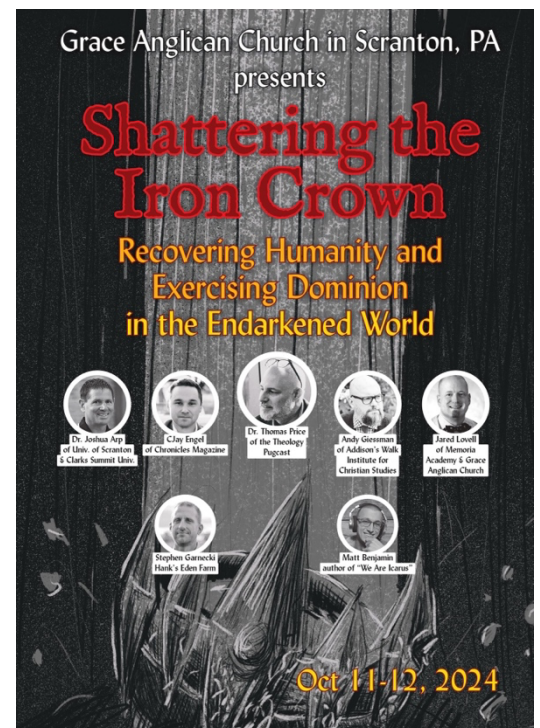
*(2e) Grace Anglican RE Mission* (Scranton, Pa) is a mission of the diocese that has been experiencing revitalization and steady growth. A number of new families with young children have been added to their number, making Grace Anglican a joyful and energetic congregation. Deacon Jared Lovell reports: “We are continuing to grow here in Scranton. We have had 13 confirmations in the past 2 years. We regularly see visitors even if they do not necessarily return every week or get involved. There was a good chunk of time a few years back that seeing a visitor seemed like a semi-annual event at best. It is now pretty common on any given Sunday to see a new face from someone either traveling through or looking for a new church.

We are also strengthening our identity as a church. We are a church that wants to promote families and be supportive of young men who will lead those families. Several of the families we have added over the past 2 years have (...) come to us looking for someone who will take a stronger stand on marriage and divorce and promote family life in the church. So this is where we have planted our flag, not to the exclusion of others, but as a recognition that this is a demographic that is underserved in our community.

We are also growing together as a congregation as well. We have had several events over the past few years that have allowed for more fellowship within the body. One of my primary objectives in leading this church is to foster friendships within the congregation that can keep us united ... and the fellowship opportunities and retreats have been a great means to that end.

We have completed our 4th fall conference. This has been our best conference yet. I have received overwhelming positive feedback from guests. We had guests who came from Indiana, Ohio, New York, Virginia and several hours of driving even within the state of Pennsylvania. With these results, we look to put on a conference once again next year.”

**3. The Means: Pray, Strategize, Work Hard, and Press On.** As we press on in this work, we are constantly being reminded that “*unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.*” Revitalization, Church Planting, or Fruitful Evangelism comes about not because of a well-executed plan or the winsome articulation of vision, but because God wills to accomplish his purposes through the continued ministry of a particular parish and people. Revitalizers or



planters need to strategize and work hard, while at the same time trusting in God's providence and timing. They also need to be prepared for opposition, and have a willingness to persevere through obstacles and discouragement, all in the confidence that ultimately the Lord will do whatever *he* wants to do – and that whatever that is, it will be good.

This work begins and is sustained by prayer. In the Ordinal the presbyter is admonished that:

forasmuch ... as your Office is of ... so great difficulty ... therefore ye ought, and have need, to [...] continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost" (*BCP REC 2003, 545*).

Writing about prayer, Anglican scholar and pastor J. I. Packer reminds us that:

... real prayer – prayer, that is, that centers on the hallowing of God's name and the doing of his will – has, among its other effects, a reflex effect. It purifies the heart; it purges our attitudes and motives; it melts down all the self-centeredness, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance that as fallen creatures we bring to it, and programs us to work humbly, in a God-honoring, God-fearing, God-dependent way (*A Passion for Faithfulness, 79*).

Please pray for the revitalization of the parishes of our diocese, for fruitful evangelism, for the steady growth of missions, and for God to raise up church planters to establish new works here. Please also prayerfully consider how the Lord may be calling *you* to engage in this important and urgently needed work. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if there is anything that I or any committee member can do to encourage or support you. Let us press on, and not loose heart.

*For Perseverance.*

O Lord our God, whose promises are true, be gracious to the work of Thy hands, and grant to us Thy servants a steady perseverance in doing Thy will, that in our days the people which serveth Thee may grow both in number and in grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Gelasian Sacramentary*).

Respectfully submitted,  
J. Patterson, *Chairman*