

# DIVERSITY AND THE GOSPEL

GOSPEL WITNESS THROUGH THREE VERY DIFFERENT MNA MINISTRIES





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

## INSIDE MULTIPLY SUMMER 2020

### DIVERSITY AND THE GOSPEL

*GOSPEL WITNESS THROUGH THREE VERY DIFFERENT MNA MINISTRIES*

- MNA NATIVE AMERICAN & FIRST NATIONS MINISTRIES, MNA REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT MINISTRY + ENGAGING DISABILITY WITH THE GOSPEL



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## From the Coordinator

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations....’ —**Matt 28:18–19 (ESV)**”



Jesus spoke this Great Commission to the apostles just before his ascension into the heavens, where he was welcomed home as the conquering Son and began his reign at the right hand of the Father, that he might fill all things in every way. We share in the apostles’ calling as those who are sent out with the good news of Jesus’ death that conquers sin and death, his resurrection that brings new life, and his ascension to rule over all things for the sake of his church (Ephesians 1:19-23). And we are to

go share this gospel with all nations, literally all “peoples” – people from all ethnic groups, people who live in all kinds of places and situations, people who have all kinds of needs and challenges, people who will have all sorts of opportunities to go and share the same good news with those in their own spheres of influence. Our going should not only take us to other parts of the world, but should take us to every different kind of person around us, those who are like us in background and circumstance and social status, and those who are from very different groups and spaces and places than we are.

In this issue of MNA *Multiply* you will read stories of a diverse group of witnesses taking the good news of Jesus in word and in deed to diverse

groups of people all around them – to Native Americans in Washington state, to Afghani refugees in Massachusetts, and to those with hearing challenges in Pennsylvania. Be encouraged by these stories of the gospel of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord breaking out and bearing much good fruit, as his people bear witness to who he is and all he has done to the peoples all around us. We at MNA love to partner with you so that the church is strengthened in the gospel to serve, grow, and multiply, all for the glory of Jesus’ name! Our witness to Jesus as king need not be blunted in these challenging times of the COVID-19 crisis, but rather enhanced, as we share the reasons for the hope we have in Jesus that transcend all circumstances.

This will be our last issue of *Multiply* in its current print format. We are excited to announce that this same content from *Multiply* will now be coming to you digitally, and far more often than once a quarter! Look for more details on our transition to a digital platform for this content moving forward, so that we can more effectively and frequently bring this same kind of gospel encouragement to you! May Christ’s peace be with you now and always! And may you share his good news with all around! Amen.

Paul Hahn  
MNA Coordinator



# DIVERSITY AND THE GOSPEL

Written by Don Baret

**M**ission to North America provides resources to strengthen PCA churches and presbyteries as they serve, grow and multiply for the advancement of the gospel throughout North America. Essential to this advancement is the preaching of the Word in worship and individual witness to the power of the Word in Gospel Ministry. In this issue we will meet three laypeople who are strong in their gospel witness through very different church ministries – MNA Native American & First Nations Ministries, MNA Refugee & Immigrant Ministry and Engaging Disability With The Gospel.

## MNA NATIVE AMERICAN & FIRST NATIONS MINISTRIES

Chuck and Neena Clevenger first met as students at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga TN. After graduation they



Chuck Clevenger with wife, Neena (above), and kids

married, decided to remain in Chattanooga and became active with First Presbyterian Church missions leadership. Chuck worked as a graphic designer and Neena taught school. In 2002, the church sent a short-term team to work with Sacred Road Ministries ([sacredroadministries.com](http://sacredroadministries.com)) on the Yakama Nation Indian Reservation in the state of Washington. It was a trip that would forever change their lives.

The Yakama Reservation numbers approximately 10,000 enrolled members. It is a rough place to live and even a rougher place to grow up. On the Yakama Reservation, the average life expectancy for Native men is 39, and for women 41. Many die violently from drug abuse, gang violence, suicides and overdoses. Many children either grow up without fathers or mothers or their parents are unknown to them.



Chuck (far right) with four teenagers from the Sacred Road Youth Group on a worksite

For Chuck, Neena and the First Presbyterian missions team, the focus of that 2002 trip to the reservation was a housing project in

the little town of White Swan. Their mornings were spent in Bible School with kids from the neighborhood and the afternoons on community service projects around the city. Chuck remembers being devastated by the level of brokenness, hopelessness and darkness in the whole community, particularly in the children. “The kids were lonely, they needed to be loved. They needed to know they mattered to someone. The only attention they would get is someone being angry with them, they had to get in trouble before anyone would notice them. They were rough, they weren’t scared of anything but if you spent time with them they would just melt into you.”



Chris Granberry and Harmony

Chris and Mary Granberry and their four children had moved to the reservation in 2003 to begin Sacred Road Ministries. Their home had been in Birmingham AL, where Chris had been the Youth Director at Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church. In 2014, Chris led in the formation of PCA mission church Hope Fellowship alongside Sacred Road Ministries in White Swan. Joshua Tsavatewa serves with both ministries also as a PCA ordained minister. Both Chris and Joshua were laypeople when they began working in these ministries, completing their training and qualification for ordination while engaged in ministry.

“THE KIDS WERE LONELY, THEY NEED TO BE LOVED. THEY NEEDED TO KNOW THEY MATTERED TO SOMEONE. THE ONLY ATTENTION THEY WOULD GET IS SOMEONE BEING ANGRY WITH THEM.”

—Chuck Clevenger





I'M SURE IT TOOK ALL HER COURAGE TO OPEN THAT DOOR AND LET ME IN. AS A TEACHER, I AM JUST SO EXCITED TO HAVE A WHOLE WORLD TO POUR INTO HER.

—Nancy Smith

Chuck and Neena returned to the reservation in 2009 to serve fulltime with Sacred Road. Chuck started a weekly youth group. It was a difficult challenge, “I was a 40-year old white guy from Tennessee, a graphic designer with no theological training and no experience, with a bunch of teenagers on a reservation; and because I felt so unprepared for what I was doing, that was what kept me focused on the Lord. He was doing it all. I didn’t use any set curriculum because nothing fit the dire straits the kids on the reservation were in; and, I stuck with Scripture! I couldn’t say, ‘I know how you

### MNA REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT MINISTRY

Across the continent from the Yakama Nation is the small town of Ipswich, located on the north shore of Massachusetts. Ipswich was settled by the first Puritan immigrants from England in 1633, and immigrants continue to settle there today through the Ipswich Refugee Program, provided by a group of Ipswich churches and civic organizations who got together to help integrate refugees and immigrants into the local community and into American culture and society. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there were 70.8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in 2019, and 25.9 million of them are under the age of 18.

Meredith Joss, a member of First Presbyterian Church Northshore, felt increasingly burdened over the years

part of it.” So, in 2016, Meredith volunteered and joined the Ipswich Refugee Program.

Meredith, a retired middle school administrator, found her calling in drawing people with different gifts into the refugee ministry. At the same time, she also coordinates the ministry efforts between the Ipswich Refugee Program and the First Presbyterian Local Missions Committee, helping mobilize people who are looking to minister and come alongside the refugees.

Nancy Smith, also from First Presbyterian, was looking for something part time when she retired from teaching. With Meredith’s encouragement, she found her part time work and ministry as a tutor for 42-year-old Anna from Afghanistan. Anna (not her real name), along with her husband and their three sons, immigrated from Afghanistan five



Sacred Road Youth Group

feel,’ because their lives were so hard. So, I let the Bible talk – Jesus knows how you feel, Jesus was hungry, Jesus had no place to lay his head. He knows what it is like for you.” Ten years ago, four kids came to that first youth group meeting. Today, there are close to 200 who participate regularly.



Worship service at First Presbyterian Church Northshore

about the growing refugee crisis. She says, “I felt more and more drawn by the Lord to be



Nancy Smith

years ago. Anna’s husband and three sons were fluent in English.

Nancy shares a little about her time with Anna: “When I first started teaching her,





she was very shy, very hesitant to speak at all. I'm sure it took all her courage to open that door and let me in. As a teacher, I am just so excited to have a whole world to pour into her. I pray for her; I pray for opportunities to share the Gospel. She and I talk about what traditions we might have in our faiths. Once her phone rang, she said that's my reminder that it is prayer time and that opened up a whole discussion on prayer. Sometimes it's about our different holidays like Ramadan and her telling me what it's about, and I share a little about Christmas."



Meredith Joss

Meredith has helped mobilize a team of volunteers from the church and from the community who work with Anna and other Ipswich refugees. These volunteers teach them to drive, help them with government paperwork, drive them to medical appointments or help them to navigate through the US culture. Nancy reflects on

**IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY, WE ARE PROUD TO BE DEAF (AND IT IS REALLY DEAF WITH A CAPITAL D)! WE ARE NOT HANDICAPPED, THERE IS REALLY NOTHING WRONG WITH US, EXCEPT WE USE A DIFFERENT WAY TO COMMUNICATE.**

**—Megan Chopek, Redemption Hill Church**

the ministry, "I think it is a great way for God to shake off from us the things that really don't matter, when you are helping someone who is really running for their lives, it is such a blessing to be there in some capacity to help."

**ENGAGING DISABILITY WITH THE GOSPEL**

Although Matt and Megan Chopek moved to Pittsburgh, in 2018, they still remember their first visit to Redemption Hill Church. Matt recalls, "Everyone was so friendly, they wanted to get to know who we were, they were easy to communicate with and after hearing the sermon, we said yep, this the church!" Finding a church has not always been easy for Matt and Megan



Megan Chopek using ASL at Redemption Hill Church

because Megan is hard of hearing and communicates by lip reading, while Matt is completely Deaf.

Megan teaches at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and also teaches American Sign Language (ASL). Matt, a former automotive technician, is now a stay-at-home dad for their five children. Megan will tell you, "In the Deaf community, we are proud to be Deaf (and it is really Deaf with a capital D)! We are not handicapped, there is really nothing wrong with us, except we use a different way to communicate. It is really a different culture and view on life."

Megan felt drawn to reach out to other Deaf women at work, "I feel that God has laid it on my heart to really be an encouragement to them and to try to create a prayer group." Megan shares the story of Jenny, one of her



Megan Chopek with Jenny

adult evening students who has both hearing and vision loss but has only accepted in adulthood that ASL will be her primary language. "Jenny was encouraged by my willingness to just listen to her. She said, 'You are so positive; I've never had someone like that in my life.' I told her it was because of my relationship with Jesus. I shared the Gospel with her and about a month ago she accepted Christ and is now attending our church. It's been amazing to see her journey because she really had nothing and now she has everything!"

Redemption Hill Church, a mission church in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, started *(continued on reverse)*



# DIVERSITY AND THE GOSPEL *(continued)*

EACH PERSON IS PRECIOUS TO THE LORD. HE HAS CALLED US AND EQUIPPED US, SO WE ARE GOING TO GO AND TRY TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER WELL.

—Peter Doerfler, Redemption Hill Pastor

weekly services in September 2018. Matt and Megan first started attending the church the following month. Also, around that time, Anne and Emmett Baxendell began attending. Anne works for a company that provides ASL interpretation for telephone calls via a relay system. From the beginning, God was adding to this new church people who needed to be ministered to in a different way, and by his grace, he was also giving them the means to reach others.

Redemption Hill Pastor Peter Doerfler was not planning on starting a church that ministered to the Deaf. But he saw the need in his congregation, and the gifts to meet that need. Those gifts, Lord willing, will continue to expand throughout the summer. Thanks to connections made



*Pastor Peter Doerfler preaching at Redemption Hill Church*

within MNA, Peter learned about Becky and Roddey Caughman's desire to use fifteen years of Deaf ministry experience in a church planting context. The Lord has put the pieces in place, and the Caughmans are raising funds and moving to Pittsburgh by the end of this summer. Reflecting on this rather daunting, cross-cultural, bilingual ministry, Peter comments, "In some places we will come up short, but that's okay, we are just growing into this. It is our goal to provide everyone who comes—Deaf or Hearing—full inclusion in the life and fellowship of our church. Each person is precious to the Lord. He has called us and equipped us, so we are going to go and try to care for one another well."



*Becky and Roddey Caughman*

For now, on Sunday mornings, Anne interprets Peter's message and Megan translates the songs. Having consistent access to the service is the first step in building a sustainable Deaf ministry. For Megan, part of the next step for the congregation is to know and respect Deaf culture. "All people need love, all are brothers and sisters



*Members of Redemption Hill Church singing and signing together*

in Christ, and we need to show them love even if it is simply writing back and forth. It really is about respecting their culture and language. Lord willing, we will be ready and understanding of anyone who comes in our doors to say – we don't know everything, but we know enough to respect who you are."

"...just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another..." —John 13:34

Mission to North America exists to celebrate and share the gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States and Canada by coming alongside the local and regional church in church planting, church renewal and missional partnerships. For a list of MNA staff, visit our website at [pcamna.org](http://pcamna.org). Material in Multiply may be reproduced with permission. Address comments to Don Baret, Managing Editor. Design provided by Big Bridge in Asheville, NC ([thebigbridge.com](http://thebigbridge.com)). Multiply is published by MNA. [Facebook.com/pcamna](https://www.facebook.com/pcamna), [twitter.com/pcamna](https://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)