

5 Ways to Strengthen Ties and Grow With Your City



Hello and thank you for downloading this resource from Mission to North America!

Because MNA exists to strengthen the church in the gospel to serve, grow, and multiply, we are thrilled to pass on to you some of the wisdom that a few of our ministry leaders have shared to help your church do the same.

In the following pages, you'll hear from the people who lead our African American Ministries, Korean American Leadership Initiative, Refugee and Immigrant, Urban and Mercy Ministries, and Engaging Disability with the Gospel. We pray their words will be inspiring and useful to you.

We would love to connect with you further to see how MNA can help your church serve, grow, and multiply. You can email Fred Marsh at fmarsh@pcanet.org or myself at cbolton@pcanet.org for general inquiries or reach out directly to any of the ministry leaders for more information on how they can help.

Peace in Christ,

Chris Bolton
MNA Operations Director

1. Strengthening Ties With The African American Community

Wy Plummer, MNA African American Ministries Coordinator

African American Ministries (AAM) exists to build a community of black Presbyterian leaders and congregants through resources and relationships, out of which we recruit, support, equip, and mobilize leaders. Our goal is to help the PCA in its mission to expand the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in all nations and cultures. Since African Americans are vastly underrepresented in the PCA (presently only about 1 percent of PCA Teaching Elders are African American), we need your help in meeting our goals.

We would welcome your assistance in the following ways:

1. Become better acquainted with issues facing the black community.

AAM and MNA have produced webinars that address these issues. You can watch them [here](#) and [here](#). AAM plans to produce similar webinars in the future. You can also read [the PCA report on racial reconciliation](#).

2. Become partners with AAM by [registering on our website](#).

3. Consider partnering with an African American led PCA church in evangelism and outreach.

4. Pray about planting an African American led PCA church. To begin a conversation about church planting, contact AAM Coordinator Wy Plummer at wy@aampca.org or AAM Associate Coordinator Howard Brown at howard@aampca.org.

5. Think about the barriers that prevent your church from reaching people from other cultural groups. You can help your church develop its cross-cultural intelligence by taking the [Intercultural Development Inventory](#) or by contacting the [Institute for Cross Cultural Mission \(ICCM\)](#).

To learn more about African American Ministries, please email Wy Plummer at wy@aampca.org.

2. Loving Your Korean American Neighbors

Moses Lee, MNA Korean American Leadership Initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for the Korean American community. From job losses to mental health conditions to anti-Asian racism, many Korean Americans have faced an onslaught of trials during this difficult season. As believers, we've been given a unique opportunity to walk alongside our neighbors and tangibly demonstrate the gospel through acts of love and service.

Consider these suggestions for serving your Korean American (and Asian American) neighbors:

- 1. Many Korean Americans have lost their small businesses during the past nine months either due to COVID-19 or riots.** Though many will never ask for help because of their background in honor and shame culture, consider how your church may be able to meet a tangible need they may have.
- 2. The loss of jobs and small businesses have a direct impact on mental health as much of Korean Americans' self-worth and purpose is tied to their work.** Reach out. They need friends, too.
- 3. Stand up for your Asian American neighbors when they are targeted with anti-Asian racism.** Being seen in this climate can go a long way toward winning over your unbelieving neighbors.
- 4. Many smaller Korean American churches that rent worship spaces are struggling to find outdoor spaces to hold their services.** If your church has outdoor space, consider offering it to them to use free of charge.
- 5. Read and study on your own about the history and culture of Korean Americans and other Asian Americans in the United States.** Several books and documentaries are available now more than ever before (e.g., [PBS's recent documentary series on Asian Americans](#)). Learn about the generational, linguistic, and cultural distinctions of Korean-speaking "first generation" Koreans, "1.5" (Koreans who have arrived in the U.S. as children or adolescents), and second-generation Korean Americans, especially as it applies to churches.

To learn more about the Korean American Leadership Initiative, please email Moses Lee at mlee@pcanet.org.

3. Engaging Refugees and Immigrants

Pat Hatch, Refugee and Immigrant Ministry Director

Our cities have become much more diverse, with residents from around the world. Yet half of the nation's immigrants now live in suburban towns. Rural communities, too, are beginning to find as their young people move away, it is immigrants who show up to work and keep Main Street alive.

One in four persons in the U.S. and one in three in Canada are either foreign-born or are the minor, citizen children of foreign-born parents. In the light of Acts: 17:26-27, these migration numbers are no accident but an integral part of God's sovereign plan to bring the nations to Himself. Whatever reason immigrants have for coming, God's hand is at work, that "they might seek Him and perhaps find Him."

Wherever you live in the U.S. or Canada, foreign-born residents are an important part of the fabric of your community. By developing authentic friendships across cultures, we contribute to the health of our communities. When all people are respected and their skills, insights, and talents are valued, both individuals and their communities can thrive. But above all, we are responding to God's command to every believer to love all our neighbors as we love ourselves, and in so doing, to demonstrate our true love for our Creator, who values each of them as much as He values us, and to bear witness to His power to unite across cultural barriers.

How do I find the refugees and immigrants in my community? Ask the Lord to open your eyes to those who have been "hidden in plain sight" in your everyday life: at the dry cleaner; coffee shop; your Uber or Lyft driver; the clerk at your grocery store; the care-givers at your child's daycare or your parent's nursing facility; those that work at your hair salon, nail salon, barbershop. Begin to not only "see" them, but to show interest in their lives, building relationships one encounter at a time.

Beverly McCord of Town North Presbyterian Church in Richardson, Texas, uses iPhone Notes to keep track of Walmart employees she meets on her weekly stops and what they share with her about themselves in casual conversations. The next time she visits the store, she scans that information before entering, so she can make a timely inquiry about the health of a sick child, the result of a citizenship test, the graduation of a daughter, etc. These small acts of interest are bearing fruit in meetings outside work. She is currently keeping up with 23 employees she has befriended in that way!

Watch for church signs in other languages: Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Urdu, etc. Ask a pastor how you can pray for or partner with his members. Does an ethnic congregation rent space in your building? If so, that's a natural opportunity to build

upon! Many immigrants are already believers, and if we exercise humility, we can learn much from them — and they can be our ideal leaders and partners in outreach to those who don't yet know Him.

In Ellicott City, Maryland, Eunice Chu of Bethel Korean Presbyterian helped to organize church volunteers in partnership with a grassroots effort (Columbia Community Care) to provide food for persons in the community who have lost work due to COVID-19. With funds donated by the broader community, as well as church donations, Bethel volunteers purchase food staples in bulk and repackage them in family-sized containers set out on dozens of tables in a Bethel kitchen area, for “shoppers” to pick up needed groceries and hygiene items quickly and safely. [See this link](#). Not only has this greatly benefitted a grassroots community effort to alleviate hunger, but Bethel has become much better known in the community.

Be on the lookout for ethnic ministries that might welcome volunteers. *Both Ken Williams and Debbie Koch of Columbia Presbyterian Church (CPC) volunteer with the Salaam Center ministry to Muslim refugees in Baltimore. Debbie teaches conversational English and makes home and hospital visits to refugee families. Ken helps refugees to understand mail and fill out important forms. This summer, CPC's youth set up a socially-distanced, free clothing shop (93 boxes-full, neatly sorted by size and displayed on tables and racks!) for refugee families at Abbott Memorial Presbyterian, near the Salaam Center, and assembled back-to-school kits from donated supplies.*

Check with your local school system. Do they have an English as a Second Language program for children? Programs for immigrant parents? Do they need volunteers? If they remain closed due to COVID, refugee and immigrant children are among the most likely to be without the means to connect to online schooling. Can you help by providing internet connection for a family for a few months and check in with them weekly? If the school has not been able to supply each student with a laptop or wifi-capable tablet, do you have a spare you could provide a specific family and help these future key workers understand how to use it to keep learning?

What are some of the most effective forms of outreach to refugees and immigrants and other internationals? Refugee and immigrant children often need after-school help with homework. Can you or your church offer such tutoring on a regular basis? A Saturday soccer program for kids? Or a weekly or monthly fun event for a few hours? Children are eager for American role models, plus loving children is one of the surest ways to establish trust with their parents.

At a PCA church in Virginia, “Ms. Sarah” started a weekly Kids’ Club for the refugee children in one housing complex, and it has grown into a vibrant ministry involving dozens of children and many church volunteers.



Is there a need for English as a Second Language classes in your area? Check what may already be offered by a Community College continuing ed program, the library, and other churches. Is there a gap you or your church might fill? (Are there no day classes? Does an existing program have a need for child care so that young moms can attend? What about a citizenship class?) [Mission to North America's ESL ministry](#) offers a 12-hour training that can equip any English speaker who loves Jesus and immigrants to teach a church ESL class—either in person or (during COVID) online.

Nearly one million international students come to the U.S. to study each year, eager for American friendship. Many are curious about Christianity and would love to ask questions informally in a safe environment. Yet each year, hundreds of thousands of these students return to their home countries having never been invited into an American home. Organizations like [Reformed University Fellowship](#), CRU's Bridges program, International Students, INC, and InterVarsity's International Student program would be delighted to put you in touch with a student you can meet for coffee once a month or invite over for a meal and conversation.

Carol Jensen helped start an international student ministry at [Arden Presbyterian Church](#) in North Carolina.

How do I as an individual get started in this type of ministry?

Ask the Lord regularly to lead you to ONE immigrant with whom you can develop an authentic friendship. For simple ideas, check out earlier posts on [lovingthestrangerblog.com](#).

Listen well to your new friend, praying the Lord will show you how to love him/her. As he/she eventually shares challenges or struggles, you might share when you have similar problems, you take them to God in prayer; ask him/her if you may pray for him/her then and there.

That one new friend will almost inevitably introduce you to others from his/her culture. Accept his/her hospitality graciously, recognizing that authentic friendship is a two-way street! Invite some of your American friends to coffee, lunch, or dinner with your new immigrant friends. Pray together for them, and watch what the Lord will do!

In short, by bringing refugees, immigrants, and other internationals to our community, the Lord has provided an opportunity for us to serve both His kingdom and our communities in practical ways, strengthening local ties — and with great eternal potential!

To learn more about Refugee and Immigrant Ministry, please call or email Pat Hatch at (443) 604-5394 or phatch@pcanet.org.



4. Caring for Mental Health and Emotional Needs

Robert Blevins, MNA Urban & Mercy Ministries Community Development Ministry Director

At the onset of the pandemic, a sense of paralysis set in for many as we encountered a disruption to nearly every aspect of life. COVID-19 brought on a range of competing emotions, from relief about finally slowing down to a real fear of sickness and even death. Church leaders realized that the times required more than delivering online services that would keep congregants coming back. We needed to find ways to stay connected while remaining socially distant.

At Southwood Presbyterian Church, we created a “Get Help/Give Help” form to better understand the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our congregants, as well as the kind of help others were willing to provide. Through various conversations and a churchwide assessment, we realized that we had a wealth of resources, including mental health professionals. We formed and convened an emotional health committee, and they shared common issues their clients were facing as a result of the pandemic including:

- heightened anxiety about the future
- anger (at the situation, others, self)
- loneliness due to loss of support system
- moral fatigue over trying to decide the “right” thing to do
- unaddressed mental health issues exacerbated by the situation

We wanted to give congregants tools to unpack all that they were facing in this unique season. We started with an article and a livestream panel discussion called, “It’s Okay If You’re Not Okay” to name and normalize emotional health challenges and to equip loved ones to provide support. We recorded a video series to explore the theme of listening well (to self, spouse, children, friends, and others who are different), which will be followed by another panel discussion of the same topic. We developed a resource guide containing common emotional health issues, symptoms, and supportive services.



Consider these tips to care for the emotional needs of congregants:

- 1. Destigmatize mental health challenges from the pulpit.** Make it safe for people to ask for help.
- 2. Develop a church-wide system for checking in on congregants.**
- 3. Create a confidential, easy-to-navigate intake process for members of your community,** which is managed by well-trained and empathetic staff members.
- 4. Identify affordable resources.** (For example, ask counselors in your church or network to donate a certain number of pro-bono hours; provide a list of free community resources and hotline numbers.)
- 5. Equip congregants to walk alongside their loved ones.** Teach warning signs and encourage them to seek outside help when necessary.

As we re-imagine what it means to be the church in this season, our temptation might be to replicate programs and models that don't fit our context. We have an opportunity to develop new ways to minister that fit with our core identity and the resources, skills, and passions already present in our congregation.

We serve a God who draws near to us, who enters into our struggles. He invites us to do the same for those in our congregation and community.

To learn more about Community Development ministry, please email or call Robert Blevins at rblevins24@gmail.com or 423.504.2565.



5. Engaging Disability Around You

Ashley Belknap, Engaging Disability With The Gospel Director

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 61 million adults in the U.S. are impacted by disability. That means one in every four adults you encounter are affected by some type of disability. You may think, “I don’t know anyone who has a disability,” but let me encourage you to think more specifically:

In your church or sphere of relationships, do you know someone who:

- has a hard time walking or climbing stairs?
- has significant difficulty concentrating, recalling details, or making decisions?
- struggles to accomplish errands?
- has impaired hearing or vision?
- battles anxiety, depression, or has other mental health concerns?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you do in fact know people living with disability. Whether or not a person openly shares a diagnosis with you, the greatest ways to learn about someone’s ability to navigate life are through simple observation and genuine friendship.

As you consider ways to strengthen relational ties and invest in meaningful ministry in your city, it is important to remember that what people with disabilities want most is to have meaningful relationships. They likely have needs you can help meet, but first and foremost, they long to connect with others. Sadly, they typically feel more isolated than most Americans.

As you build relationships with people who have disabilities, remember they do not want one-sided relationships where your primary interest is in serving them. Genuine relationships are not service-oriented in nature. Genuine relationships develop when each person mutually shares aspects of his/her life — strengths, weaknesses, dreams, goals, and more.

Consider these tips for developing friendships with people impacted by disability:

- 1. Be willing to take the initiative.** If you know people with a disability but wish to know them more, be willing to take the first step. A simple text, phone call, or encouraging note is little risk to you but will likely be a huge encouragement to them.
- 2. Reach out to someone who is lonely.** If you feel uncomfortable or think you lack the skills to help someone with a disability, start by reaching out to a person who is lonely. Often, we forget relationships involve learned skills that must be practiced.
- 3. Ask questions.** Many of us mistakenly think people impacted by disability only want to talk about their disabilities. This simply is not true. Disability is a significant part of their lives, but it is certainly not the whole of their lives. Ask about interests, hobbies, foods they love, or what they have done this week. Shared interests strengthen friendships greatly.

Since the onset of COVID-19, every church in North America has had to take exceptional, speedy steps to move the majority of its ministry into online platforms. It has never been easier to invite people with disabilities in your community to become part of your church's ministries, because they can do so from home along with everyone else.

As you reach out, consider:

- **Sharing online platforms for worship.** This is an easy and non-threatening way for people with a disability to worship alongside your congregation. Offer to help troubleshoot any technology problems they may have.
- **Introducing them to others in the congregation.** It is exceedingly hard to be an intentional church visitor because no one knows when you join live-streamed service. Think of other church members who might offer encouraging relationships, and connect them to people with disabilities you are trying to reach. This will help further enfold them into the church.

To learn more about Engaging Disability With The Gospel, please email Ashley Belknap at abelknap@pcanet.org.

