

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH PLANTER FUND (AACPF)

**A Vision for the Richmond Area and the James River
Presbytery (PCA) Initiated and Managed**

By

The Metro-Richmond Church Planting Network (MRCPN)

The African American Church Planter Fund (AACPF) is a vision of what we believe God is doing in the Richmond area and how you can help.

The AACPF is the result of discussions in West End Presbyterian Church to plant churches among minorities and especially African Americans (AAs). This vision was first named a "joint venture" and was adopted by the Metro Richmond Church Planting Network (MRCPN), a greater Richmond group of PCA churches whose goal is to facilitate church plants in this area. And the network functions under the James River Presbytery through the Missions Committee. It is on behalf of the MRCPN, that this vision is being presented for your information and support.

WHAT IS THE AACPF?

A CONTINUING FUND:

❖ TO PLANT CHURCHES

- AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS
- HISTORY OF CHURCH PLANTING

❖ TO DRAW AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH PLANTERS

- COMPETE WITH COMPETITION (50+ AA PCA PASTORS)
- PROVIDE SECURE FOUNDATION (PRESENT AND FUTURE)

❖ TO FULFILL BIBLICAL MANDATES AND PCA COMMITMENTS

First, it is a continuing fund, we see it as an ongoing venture for this area to see the gospel go into AA communities. And we have a lot of ground to make up with these communities.

We want to plant churches because it has been shown statistically that new churches are 6-8 times more effective in drawing new people into the body of Christ than established churches (D. MacGavran and G. Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies that Work*, 100). Planting churches has been the history of God's people since Jesus gave us the great commission to go into all the world and make disciples. It is also our history in the PCA but only to an embarrassingly small extent to AAs. The AACPF is an effort to do better.

To plant these churches we know AA leadership will be crucial, both for building relationships and to show our commitment and love to these communities which we've often failed to do in the past. However, there aren't many AA Teaching Elders or pastors in the Presbyterian Church in American (PCA). About 1 % of our Teaching Elders are AA. And our seminaries are graduating few with Covenant Seminary, for instance, graduating four Masters of Divinity or equivalent students in 2018, with 15 total in the school. The need for AAs in leadership is more and more recognized across the PCA, so there is a lot of opportunity and competition for AA pastors. So we need to be well funded to be competitive as these leaders seek God's direction and to provide a strong base of support for their church plants. Once a candidate is identified and supported by a local church, the James River Presbytery would approve and qualify them.

We believe the AACPF will help us fulfill the biblical mandate given us in Matthew 18, and recently affirmed by the PCA General Assembly. Which brings us to . . .

WHY DO WE NEED AN AACPF IN RICHMOND?

❖ BIBLICAL MANDATE

Ephesians 2:14-22 “broke down the dividing wall of hostility”

Revelation 7:9,10 “from every nation, tribe and tongue”

Matthew 9:35-38 “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few”

❖ GENERAL ASSEMBLY OVERTURE (2016)

“Recommits itself to the gospel task of racial reconciliation, diligently seeking courses of action to further that goal. . .”

❖ PCA HISTORY AND CULTURE

“Our great hope is the PCA of 2035 would be a genuinely multiracial church, both in our local congregations and in our higher courts.” Sean Lucas

❖ RICHMOND RACE AND CULTURAL MAKEUP

Jesus told us in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples of all nations (28:18-20). And Paul tells us Jesus has broken down the dividing wall that separates us as people and made us one new man in Christ (Ephesians 3:14-16). There is no longer any division between us in Christ. In heaven we see saints from every nation, tribe and tongue before the throne of God praising his name together (Revelation 7:9,10). Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, or “many”, in contrast with the workers who are few. We always need more workers for the harvest (Matthew 9:37).

Along with the biblical mandate, we have the general assembly overture of 2016 which recommits the PCA to racial reconciliation and “diligently seeking courses of action to further that goal. . .” We believe the AACPF fulfills both the biblical and general assembly guidance.

Unfortunately, our present culture in the PCA doesn't look the way we want to look in the future. We are predominantly white, middle to upper class. And it has been documented that our history is not always pretty, whether we consider the civil war or the civil rights movement of the 60s, right up to the present time. We haven't reached out or made the effort in many cases that we should. Pastor and historian Sean Lucas said, “Our great hope in the PCA of 2035 would be a genuinely multiracial church, both in our local congregations and in our higher courts.”

This brings us to Richmond's situation and our racial and cultural makeup.

METRO-RICHMOND CULTURAL MAKEUP (372,000 AFRICAN AMERICANS)

- WHITE
- BLACK
- ASIAN
- HISPANIC
- OTHER

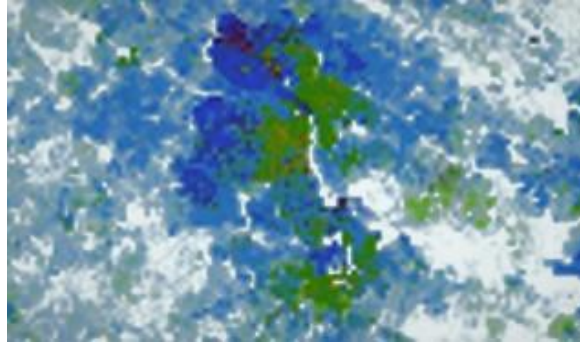


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This population dot chart from UVA shows the cultural and racial breakdown in the Richmond area represented by different colors. The green areas represent AAs. Whites are blue; Asians, red; Hispanics, orange; and all other racial categories are coded as brown. (Based on 2010 census data).

For orientation on the slide, toward the middle of the slide, the white line going north-south between the two large green areas is the James River with Chesterfield to the west and Richmond and Henrico to the north and east.

The 372,000 AAs living in the Metro-Richmond area is based on a 2016 projection. About 300,000 (80%) of those live in Richmond city, Henrico and Chesterfield counties and represents about 35% of the overall population in those counties. Richmond city is almost 50% AA.

METRO-RICHMOND CULTURAL MAKEUP

- ❖ **372K, (29%) AA Metro-Richmond Area**
- ❖ **290K, (35%) AA Richmond City, Henrico, Chesterfield**
- ❖ **15 Churches Metro-Richmond Area/2 Multi-cultural (11%)**

There were projected to be about 1.27 million people in the Metro-Richmond area as of 2016. As you can see, almost 30% of those are AAs; about 35% in the 3 counties with the highest concentration.

Of the 14 churches in the Metro-Richmond area, two (14%) are specifically AA cross-cultural - Northside in Richmond and Crown and Joy on the south side. And just one was planted by an African American pastor. Northside Church has an African American Pastoral Internship program to develop AA pastors and we see this as a great complement to the AACPF. New pastors need a church. Maybe one day a graduate of Northside's program will plant a church in Richmond with funding from the AACPF!

All of this is a great start but we want to do better. Not just because of the numbers but because it's the right thing to do.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- ❖ **PRAY: FOR THE PCA, YOUR CHURCH, THE AACPF**

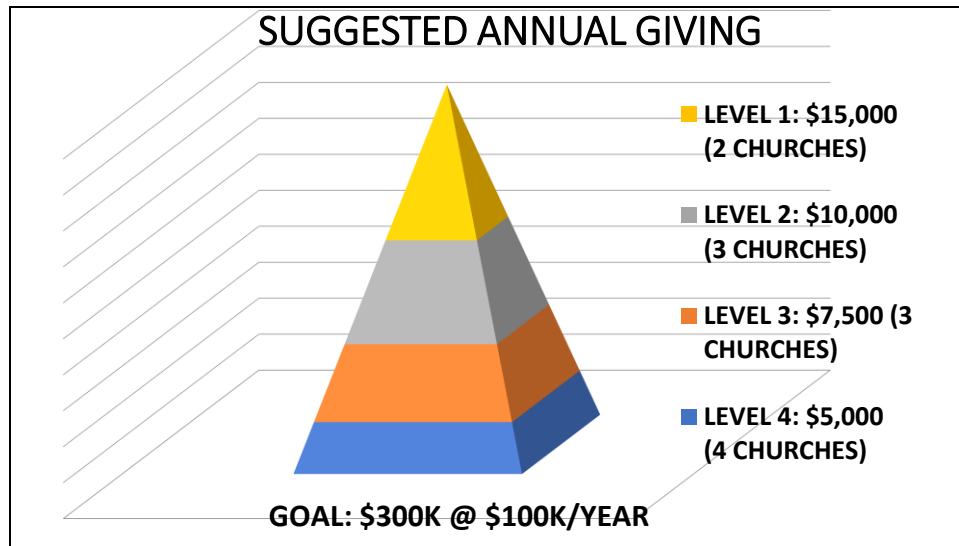
- ❖ **REACH OUT: LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO REACH ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES**

- ❖ **GIVE GRACIOUSLY: CONSIDER SUPPORTING THE AACPF AS A CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALLY (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)
“see that you excel in this act of grace”**

Proverbs 15:29 says: “The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.” The best thing we can do in anything is pray. Pray for our denomination, that we will follow through on our commitment to look more like the church we see in Revelation 7. Pray for your local church, that you will seek to fulfill the biblical mandate to share the gospel across social, economic and racial barriers. Please pray for the AACPF, that we would have the funding to draw AA Pastors to our area and become a known, attractive destination for those interested in planting AA and cross-cultural or multiethnic churches.

Reach out to AAs and to others across ethnic groups with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And encourage your church and friends to do the same. If we are committed to our Lord’s mandate to go into all the world – that includes those who are different than us right where we are.

Lastly, we ask that you will prayerfully consider giving graciously to this vision. That you will join us in this joint venture to take the gospel to a people we have too long ignored or even spurned. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul calls the generosity of the Macedonian (Gentile) churches an “act of grace”, as they gave to the Jewish church in Jerusalem. One commentator has said, “What better way to demonstrate grace than for Gentiles to give to Jewish churches!” Giving and planting churches across racial boundaries, especially, shows the world the love of Jesus and demonstrates the grace of God in us.



Finally, we are seeking gracious givers among our local churches and individual Christians. This slide shows the levels of annual gracious giving that we need to reach our goal. If we have two churches give at level 1, three at level 2 and so forth, we will make our continuing goal of \$100k per year. We also need individual donors who are excited about this vision. We would ask that you consider giving, either as an individual or church, at a level appropriate for how God has blessed you materially.

Please also pray about others you know, in your work or neighborhood, or in your church who might be interested in this vision. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact us through West End Presbyterian Church: 804-741-6562 or mail@wepc.org or www.wepc.org. We pray the Lord's blessing on you and thank you for this opportunity to share what God is doing in Richmond! May our God's Kingdom grow and may he receive all honor, glory and praise!