



Project Wilmington

Our Vision

Although Wilmington, North Carolina is one of the fastest growing areas of the state, there has not been a commensurate growth in Christ-centered, culture engaging churches. The MNA Committee of Eastern Carolina Presbytery has identified the city as a strategic location for a church plant that will serve as a stronghold for a Reformed witness to the Gospel in all of Southeastern North Carolina --- a church that can eventually plant and help support other church plants in New Hanover and adjacent counties.

About the Community

The historic city of Wilmington is located in Southeastern North Carolina between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean. The downtown area of stately homes, established residential areas, and vibrant waterfront of restaurants and shops contrasts with the tremendous amount of new growth along the College Road Corridor (location of the 12,000 student University of North Carolina at Wilmington) and Military Cutoff Corridor (home of the mixed-use Mayfaire development). Although historically the area has been similar to that of rural eastern North Carolina --- a place characterized by farming, fishing, and small businesses --- in the last 30 years the area has been transformed by inter- and intra-state migration, including retirees, tourists, and young adults entering the working market. In addition, as with other parts of the state, the area has witnessed an increase in its Hispanic population which, added to the already significant present of African-American and Asian minorities, makes for a diverse population.

There are more than 95,000 residents in Wilmington proper, and more than 175,000 people in New Hanover County --- a 33% increase over 1990. A quarter of the population is age 17 and under, a fifth is age 55 and over, and the remainder between 18 and 54. Though the population swells in the tourist season, the beach communities of Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach continue to grow as more people live in these communities year-round. To the south, Brunswick County, with historic Southport, Leland (just across the river from Wilmington), and beach communities, has steadily shed its largely rural character to become a prime spot for development, both resort and year-round, growing 43% in the 1990s alone for a present-day population of over 85,000. To the north, Pender County continues to experience growth, primarily along waterways and on the beaches, almost doubling in population size in the 1990s alone. With all this growth, Wilmington has retained a small-town sensibility yet with many of the urban services one might expect in a larger city. It has competitive sports teams, an art community and museum, and even a Screen Gems studio for the production of movies and television shows (such as WB's *One Tree Hill*).

Despite all this growth, there is very little Reformed witness in the community and a dearth of churches with solid, biblical expository preaching. The closest PCA church is Harvest Presbyterian, in Jacksonville, yet that church is about 1 ½ hours drive and, thus, cannot effectively minister to the Wilmington area. There are small congregations of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and Orthodox Presbyterian Church (formerly a PCA church), as well as a larger Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, but Baptist churches dominate the city and surrounding area, with a smattering of other denominations. There is, however, one non-denominational church, Christ Community, which is Reformed in witness and will be very supportive of a church plant. There are opportunities for effective outreach to university students, newcomers to the area looking for a church home or who may be spiritually searching, retirees, and even the tourist community.

About the Project

As there are no PCA churches in close proximity to Wilmington, this project is envisioned as a scratch start, suitable for a mature church planter who, in addition to gifts of teaching and preaching, can effectively meet and engage potential members, being proactive in the community and persevering in a good work. Eastern Carolina Presbytery will provide oversight to the work as well as \$45,000 in funds to be paid in annual \$15,000 installments. The church planter will be responsible for raising the rest of his support --- with the goal being a self-supporting work within three years. Planting a church is a huge task, but God is able to accomplish more than we can imagine (Eph. 3:20). You will not be alone, either: Eastern Carolina Presbytery will provide a temporary session to encourage, advise, and assist you until God raises up qualified officers from your congregation.

Conclusion

Eastern Carolina Presbytery recognizes that church planting is a primary way in which the Kingdom of God will be planted in our region. Given its rapid growth and hub for Southeastern North Carolina, Wilmington is a strategic location for an effective Reformed witness.

For More Information

For further information on Wilmington, visit <http://www.wilmingtonchamber.org/movinghere.html> , <http://www.ci.wilmington.nc.us>, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilmington%2C_North_Carolina.

If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please contact Byron Peters, Chair of the MNA Committee of Eastern Carolina Presbytery, at ecpmna@yahogroups.com or 919-