



Intro from the Synodical Committee on Home Missions:

In this special issue of The Trumpet, we look beyond the “what” and “how” of church planting to consider the deeper “why.”

Rev. Joel Dykstra of the Wellandport URC shares the story behind the planting of a daughter congregation in Pelham, Ontario, showing how the Lord's blessings, providence, and growing opportunities led one church to take up this work. His reflection offers encouragement and a call to other congregations to prayerfully consider how they too might be used to extend the light of the gospel through the planting of new churches.



PELHAM, ONTARIO

church plant of Wellandport URC

Over the past number of years the Lord's bounty towards our congregation (Wellandport United Reformed Church) was experienced in several ways, including an increasing membership. Soon our sanctuary was insufficient for all those who were joining in worship each Lord's Day. Then our overflow began to flow over. But, because we are pragmatists, it was only when our parking lot became too full that we began to think about how best to use this bounty of the Lord to advance his church and kingdom. We struck a committee to consider this question and the process of planting a new congregation began.

As simple as this may seem, planting a new congregation is logistically challenging. In some Federations, like the Canadian Reformed Churches, the process of planting a new congregation is a standard affair with a long history and familiar expectations. For one reason or another, it is not the same in our Federation. Yet into this challenge we were able to witness the providence of God in real time. As we considered how to best use the blessings of the Lord for his glory, our Federation was revising its Church Planting Manual. It became quickly apparent that the wisdom of this manual provided a path forward for our congregation.

For context, though there are 20 NAPARC congregations in this slice of God's Kingdom, there is a darkened area in our region that does not enjoy the blessing of faithful congregations.



Some years ago, we had partnered with four area URC congregations to address this need. This dimmed community runs north to south between Lake Ontario to Lake Erie and is economically lower class and invested with familiar societal ills. We began by working together to plant a congregation on the northern portion of this gloomy stretch, in the city of Niagara Falls, known as the epicenter of human trafficking in Canada. Wanting to continue to this work, we identified a community some kilometres south of Niagara Falls as the next location in need of faithful Reformed witness. In God's providence, this community has become a growth community because of its lower housing prices, especially among young families. We were confident that we had found the place for our church plant and that we would be extending the boundaries of the gospel's light within our community.

SAVE THE DATE

CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONS TRAINING 2026

The Cross-Cultural Missions Training (CCMT) program explores the principles and practice of foreign missions through hands-on experience and intensive study. Seasoned missionaries and pastors train in culture, language, and Bible teaching, both in a classroom setting and then on the field.

WHEN? May 16 – June 13, 2026
WHERE? Mexico
WHO? Young Adults 18+



For more information please contact Pastor Rich Bout at: urcnamissions@gmail.com

Excited at this opportunity we began to do our due diligence. A NAPARC congregation had recently begun ministering on the boundaries of where we hoped to plant our congregation. In acknowledgement of our comity agreement we approached them and informed them of our intentions. They were more than happy to provide any help we might need. We then identified that portion of our congregation closest to this hoped for area and polled them about participating in this work. And our committee began to look for a suitable building for worship. It was in this last step that we were brought to realize that the plans of mice and men oft go awry, reminding us to always depend upon the Lord's leading and guiding.

Again, for context, as in so many places of Western Civilization so too in our region, many churches are shuttering their doors and putting their properties up for sale. Many of these buildings are of mainline denominations which have been in steady decline over the past few decades. With so many worship facilities available for purchase, municipalities are loath to allow new church builds. What is more, because the area we had identified was underserved by the church, there were not many available facilities for sale. But the municipality was resistant to the idea of our building a facility. Our government officials do not share our vision for the advancement of God's church and kingdom. For this very practical reason, we began to cast our net wider. Some facilities would have suited for our purpose but was too far from the members of our congregation involved in birthing this new daughter church. Other buildings were not suited to purpose or unwilling to rent to us. So, the boundary was extended again, and we were finally able to secure a facility for this new congregation.

This new facility offered blessings and challenges. Its location kept us from fulfilling the vision of pushing the boundaries of NAPARC in our community. And from the beginning of our occupancy, the space was almost at capacity. However, the blessing of this facility was that it was central to many of those members who were involved in bringing about this new church and it allowed us to begin shining the light of God's goodness and grace into a new community. Recognizing this as God's good providence, we rejoiced at how he led this work to its beginning.



On June 1st of this year the congregation in Pelham began worshipping and now holds forth the gospel there under the banner of Christ. Since that time, we have become even more convinced of the need for further church plantings. We see the world around us growing increasingly dark. We are grateful for our Federations commitment to planting churches through her Federational and Classical Mission's Committees. It is our prayer that on more and more hills within our communities the light of God's city will shine through the faithful gathering of God's people in worship and in witness.

