

For such a time as this....

By Josh Geiger, HLI Board Member

America is changing. The demographics of America are changing, as God is more and more bringing the nations to America and the once majority-white, Anglo-Saxon, culture is increasingly becoming one among many (Acts 17:27). The spiritual climate of America is changing, as the majority culture that was once rooted in the Scriptures becomes increasingly unfamiliar with orthodox Christian faith.

These changes present many challenges to the church – and also many new opportunities. God is calling the church in America to become a truly missional church, a church that recognizes itself as part of a society that is increasingly pluralistic in its culture, demographics, and spirituality, a church which embraces the missionary challenge to make disciples in our own nation, and a church which is praying and acting strategically, to meet this missional challenge.

We love the PCA. We believe that the PCA's historic commitments to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and the Great Commission make it especially, if not perhaps even uniquely, equipped to meet the challenges of the present missional moment. We believe that God would use the PCA to proclaim Christ and shape the course of our nation in profound and eternally significant ways. We long to see the PCA seize the present missional moment and be powerfully used by God to glorify His Name through the salvation of the lost in our nation and throughout the world.

We believe that critical to seizing the present missional moment in America is to have missional leadership. That is, we must have leaders who share the PCA's historic commitments to the Scriptures, the Great Commission, and the Reformed faith, and who, at the same time, emerge from, understand, and love the diverse communities of America's new pluralistic reality. We believe that the PCA must work prayerfully and strategically to identify, encourage, support, and launch such leaders into the harvest field that is our new America. This will require a new degree of intentionality in thinking about leadership development, and it will require new methods which are better suited to train leaders for our new missional context.

We believe that new methods for developing missional leadership for the PCA must take the following realities into account:

- **New Financial Realities:** Many of the communities from which these missional leaders will emerge are low-income communities, and these new leaders will not have the same financial resources with which to be trained. This means that the cost of training these leaders must be addressed by the church, and that lower-cost training methods must be developed and embraced by the PCA.
- **New Educational Realities:** The communities where many of these leaders live have been underserved by America's educational system. The result is that many of these emerging leaders are less equipped to meet the academic standards for licensure and ordination. This means that in order to raise up leaders who emerge from, and who will serve in, these communities, the PCA must carefully re-consider its qualifications for

leadership. We must carefully consider what academic qualifications are necessary for leaders in this new context, and we must also consider what other areas, perhaps not previously considered (such as cultural and emotional intelligence) are needed for our new missional context.

- **New Technological Realities:** Technology is changing the way we access information. Greek and Hebrew tools, once only available in books and not easily accessible, are now readily available. At the same time, seminary-level training that once required emerging leaders to attend brick and mortar campuses is now increasingly available in formats which allow people to learn without leaving the context of their home community and home church. These new technological realities offer the church a great opportunity to re-envision how leadership training is done. The PCA must embrace and carefully think through how these technological realities affect both the academic standards required for leadership and how those leaders are trained.