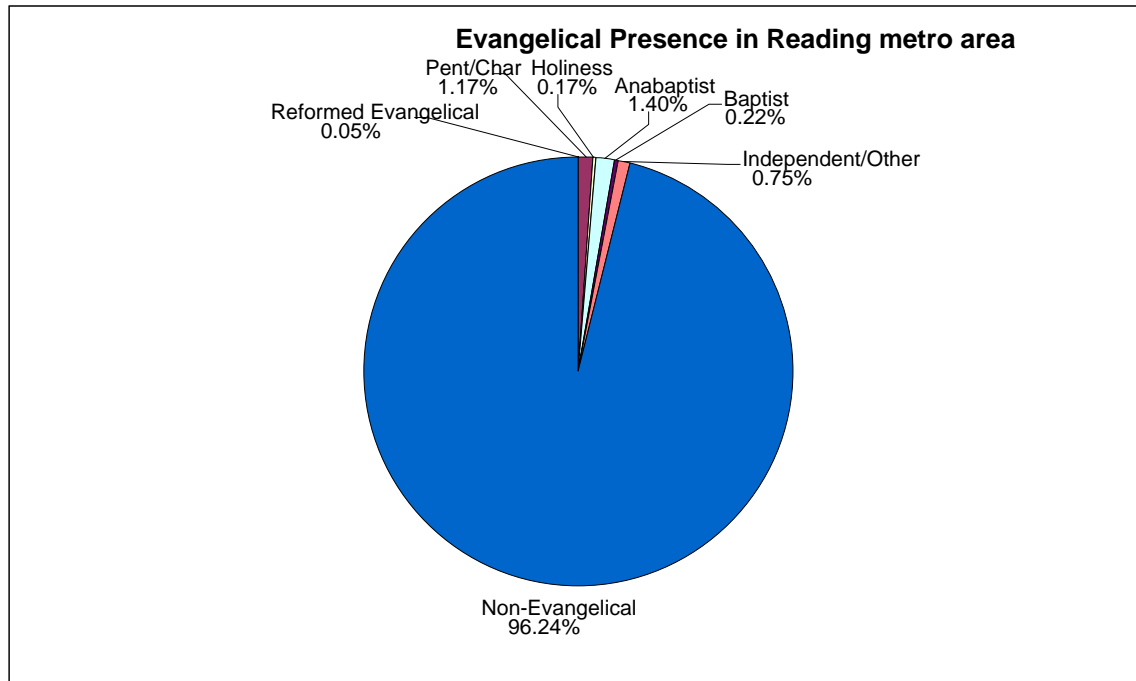


# THE READING PROJECT

## A NEW KINGDOM INITIATIVE IN THE GREEN DIAMOND

Our Vision: “A Christ-centered, worshiping Christian community, full of grace and truth, drawing the nations to Christ at the human crossroads of metro Reading”.

The opportunity for ministry:<sup>1</sup>

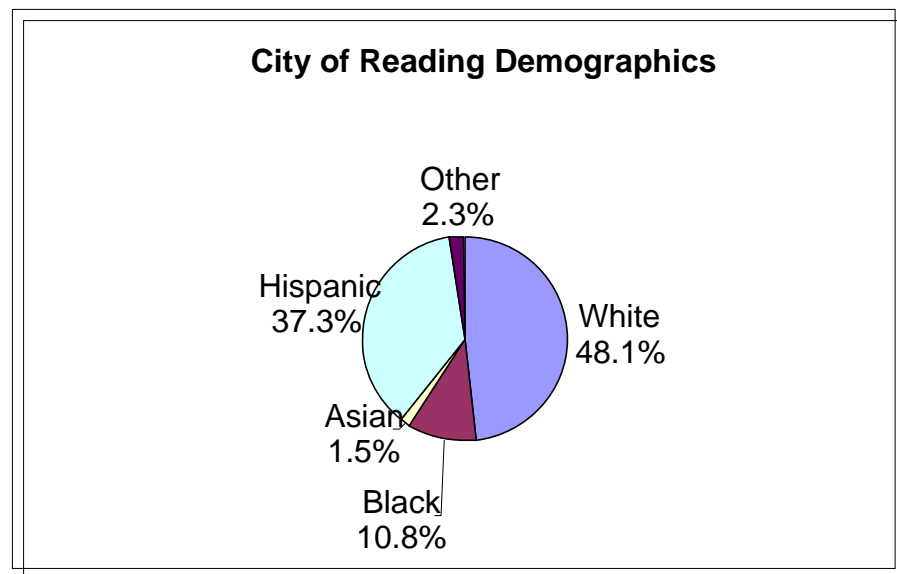


<sup>1</sup> Graph data taken from the American Religion Database: [www.thearda.com](http://www.thearda.com). The American Religion Data Archive is housed at the Pennsylvania State University in the Department of Sociology and the Social Science Research Institute.

We envision a church that will be a "taste of heaven", embracing the Reading metro area.

- We envision a church that is winsome in its presentation of Christ to nonbelievers, that understands the radical nature of the Cross, of grace and redemption for sinners.
- We envision a community where we begin with the assumption of our brokenness and spiritual flaws, where it is safe to be nothing but a redeemed sinner beloved of God solely through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- We envision a church where Christ is the center of our lives, where the Lord's Supper, celebrated each Sunday, becomes the visible sign of our inward spiritual union with Christ and one another and the basis for tangible acts of mercy and love.
- We envision a community that loves learning about God so that we may better love and serve Him, this wondrous God of grace.
- We envision a church community that loves mercy and preaches the gospel in both words and deeds to all who will listen.
- We envision a church community that embraces the crossroads of humanity at the center of the city of Reading, knowing that "where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more".

Pray with us that the Lord would bring a taste of "heaven on earth" that reflects the nations gathered in metro Reading:<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Earth Research Systems [www.ersys.com/usa/42/4263624/ethnic.htm](http://www.ersys.com/usa/42/4263624/ethnic.htm)

When the statistical area is broadened to a 15-mile radius around the city of Reading, the numbers change considerably, as one would expect (86% Anglo, 9% Hispanic, 3% African-American, 1% Asian), but:

- The total population climbs to over 455,000
- "...based upon the total number of groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *very high*."
- By 2009, the Anglo population will *decrease*, the African-American population will remain stable and the Hispanic and Asian populations will all *increase* as a percentage of the total population.
- And the "lifestyle diversity in the area is *extremely high*"<sup>3</sup>

Further, 63% of all new movers in Berks County relocated to metro Reading.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Reading's unique characteristics will require targeted, strategic ministries.</b>
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- A rich, full worship that celebrates the full range of a covenant relationship with God every Sunday and invites non-believers to that covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ
- Community groups, Bible studies and discipleship training for men and women
- Youth outreach and ministry
- Campus ministry that integrates with the local church
- Mercy ministry, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and Bible studies targeted at the various majority and minority culture communities represented in Reading
- Identifying, recruiting and training potential church-planting ministers

We believe that the field is ready for harvest and that there is a particular opportunity for a church that will become the center of a church planting movement within Berks County as a whole. Having spent much of my growing up years in Berks County, I look forward to returning there and ministering. My wife, Cindy, and our children are supportive of this project, understanding both its risks and its potential.

And, having spent over 10 years in New England, where the needs are similar, and having seen the Lord work in Providence, Rhode Island, we believe that the Lord has called us to this particular project and has prepared us through our previous experiences.

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<sup>3</sup> Percept demographic study prepared for The Reading Project, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> Tower Publishing, e-mail from Mary Anne Hildreth

Here is one example of how we have seen God work during our tenure in Rhode Island. One example is a young man named Nathaniel Koliyah. I met Nathaniel at an international student dinner that we hosted when the church started. Nathaniel began coming to church, and soon a number of Liberians were coming with him. Nathaniel recently began training for the ministry and has come under care of the Southern New England Presbytery. We are thankful for Nathaniel's path of discipleship and for the other stories of lives who have been impacted by the love and mercy of God. Our hope is that God will continue the stories of His transforming work in Providence, Rhode Island, and now in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Our prayer is that God will raise up a church that has a vision for gospel-centered life and mission and for a ministry that will inspire and train new ministers who are entrepreneurial and willing to go into many areas underserved by the gospel ministry in Reading. We trust that God will establish a cross-centered, grace-filled community that celebrates the Lord Jesus' redemption by His body and blood and which lives out the reality of the Lord's Table during the week in humble service and mercy ministry. This alone can provide the foundation for this long-term vision.

#### This is why we are raising funds now.

Some of the populations whom we hope to reach will not be able to fully support gospel ministry at first. In addition, identifying appropriate meeting and office space, and adding the appropriate ministry and support staff within a reasonable timeframe require seed money upfront until the church can truly become a self-supporting, church planting movement. To that end, we are seeking to raise \$330,000 over the next four years.

The Susquehanna Valley Presbytery has already committed \$80,000 this first year. *Would you join with us in considering this challenge as an opportunity for faith?* If the Presbytery is able to contribute as much as half that amount next year, that leaves \$200,000.00 to be raised over the next four years. It sounds like a big goal, but when it is broken down into manageable sizes, this goal can be reached. Consider how your gift, no matter how small or large, could fit into the larger picture of seeing this goal met:

##### One-time gifts

- ☐ 10 gifts of \$1,000
- ☐ 8 gifts of \$2,500
- ☐ 5 gifts of \$5,000
- ☐ 3 gifts of \$10,000

##### Monthly pledges for 4 years

- ☐ 125 pledges of \$25 monthly
- ☐ 100 pledges of \$50 monthly
- ☐ 75 pledges of \$75 monthly
- ☐ 50 pledges of \$100 monthly
- ☐ 25 pledges of \$250 monthly
- ☐ 13 pledges of \$500 monthly

The apostle Paul is clear that those who preach must be sent.

Romans 10:14-15 ... And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? ...

My family and I are willing and ready to go and preach. The Mission to North America Committee of the PCA is helping send us by working with us to develop the project, helping with budgeting,

fundraising, coaching and many other ongoing support services. Our presbytery has committed a significant amount of their resources to this project. Will you consider whether the Lord would have you involved as well? Will you join in sending us? Please prayerfully consider how you might become part of our team in reaching Reading and Berks County with the gospel.

In addition to using the enclosed pledge card, you may also

- ✓ contribute **online** to “The Reading Project” at [www.pca\\_mna.org](http://www.pca_mna.org),
- ✓ **email** your pledge of support for “The Reading Project” to [mnapledge@pcanet.org](mailto:mnapledge@pcanet.org).
- ✓ donate stocks, mutual funds, real estate, or make a confidential cash contribution to “The Reading Project Church Designated Fund” at the **PCA Foundation**
  - online at [www.pcafoundation.com/main/HowtoGift.htm](http://www.pcafoundation.com/main/HowtoGift.htm),
  - by phone (1-800-700-3221)
  - or mail your check for “The Reading Project Church Designated Fund” to

PCA Foundation  
1700 North Brown Road, Suite 103  
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

- ✓ or send your tax-deductible contributions **directly** to:

The Reading Project  
c/o Luke Hibshman, Treasurer  
864 East Main St.  
Ephrata, PA 17522

There are other important ways in which you can be involved.

You can commit to pray on a daily or weekly basis in your own personal prayer time. You can join our prayer team which will meet regularly in Reading. You can direct potential core group members our way, or let us know their names and we can contact them. You can let us know of other potential donors and prayer warriors who will stand with us in this "New Kingdom Initiative in the Green Diamond".

I would be happy to talk with you more about this project. Please feel free to contact me at any time:

Rev. Melvin Sensenig  
1496 Cedar Top Road  
Reading, PA 19607  
Phone (610) 775-4883  
[melvin.sensenig@aya.yale.edu](mailto:melvin.sensenig@aya.yale.edu)

A Concluding Personal Postscript: Idubin Vargas in his own words...

[Idubin is Mel's foster brother, and his life is a testimony of how the gospel, communicated in both word and deed, can change lives in Reading, PA, both now and for eternity.]

I was born in New York into a non-Christian family. My dad was an alcoholic and abusive toward my brother and sisters, but most of all to my mother. It got to the point where my mother couldn't take it anymore so that she decided to take us kids to Reading. I had the choice of staying with my mom or my dad, and at that point I wanted to be with my dad. But in the end, my dad decided it would be better for me to go with my mother. I am extremely glad it happened that way because it gave me the chance of enjoying life in Christ Jesus because of what happened to me in Reading, Pennsylvania.

When I was six, we moved to Reading into an apartment on Third Street. I started making friends and hanging out with the wrong crowd. I started getting into stealing in a row of stores on Penn St. and getting caught did not help with my relationship with my mom. My sisters, on the other hand, would stay out past curfew and the police would end up bringing them home, until social services found out that it had happened more than once and then they were taken into foster care.

We moved around a lot the next three years. The second to last time that my mom and brothers moved, we landed on 923 Franklin Street where a friend of mine introduced me to the Friday night kids' ministry in the apartment below. That's when I met a lot of great Christian people, including LaMarr and Naomi Sensenig. That Christmas was a big one in the years that I lived in Reading because the gift packages that were given by LaMarr and Naomi contained winter clothing that our family needed. A couple of months after that we moved again, but I continued to visit the ministry every Friday.

Then one day my older brother and I got into a big argument and he started throwing books at me. One of them caught me under my right eye. For the next week or two I had a black eye. And it happened that one of the days after that incident my sisters' social service caseworker stopped and he didn't like what he saw so he started to work on finding a foster home for me to live in. However, I asked if I could talk to some people I know and see if they would like to be the ones to take care of me. The next Friday that I saw LaMarr and Naomi I asked them and they said yes. Within two weeks I moved into the Sensenig household. Shortly after I moved in I became a Christian and got baptized at a local friend's pool – and almost met my Maker later that night while we were swimming! Thank God my brother dove in the pool after me because I couldn't swim well at all.

For the past 12 years I have been living with this wonderful family and growing as a Christian. Though the rest of the siblings of my Sensenig family have gotten married and moved out, I find myself being really blessed by my relationships with the Sensenig family and my real family whom I visit often in Reading. And that is something that I am most thankful for, because if God hadn't put LaMarr and Naomi in my life I probably would be following a much different (and worse) path, but because of their witness, I came to Christ, was saved, and am living for Jesus.

I am thankful that God brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to me in Reading and that He took me off the path that I would otherwise have gone down. I pray that God continues to send more messengers of the gospel into Reading.