



# Twin Lakes Fellowship

A Ministry of the Session of the historic First Presbyterian Church (1837), Jackson, Mississippi  
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*A Ministerial Fraternal for Kingdom Extension*

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## Introducing the *Twin Lakes Fellowship*

### I. What is the *Twin Lakes Fellowship*?

The *Twin Lakes Fellowship* is a ministerial fraternal devoted to the encouragement of Gospel ministry and ministers, and to the promotion of healthy biblical church planting. The *Twin Lakes Fellowship* is a ministry of the Session of the historic First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS (in conjunction with several other PCA sessions and ministers in Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina). This fellowship is designed to pursue a twofold purpose: (1) to encourage ministers and churches to promote the work of church planting through their local congregations and (2) to encourage ministers in their personal growth in grace, so as to maximize their effectiveness in promoting the work of the Gospel.

To put it another way, the *Twin Lakes Fellowship* aims to be an American Presbyterian version of the Crieff Brotherhood in Scotland, except with a specific, positive ministry focus: to encourage church planting through a variety of specific, practical means. When groups of ministers and elders gather in the PCA it is generally for General Assembly, Presbytery, or denominational activism (Concerned Presbyterians, PCA Consensus, or the Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Network). The purpose of the *Twin Lakes Fellowship* is, however, positive and Spiritual rather than political. It is also unique. The *PCA Convocation of Reformation and Revival* (with whom we are in friendly partnership) has and will continue to promote a good pastoral setting for gathering (it is perhaps the best thing going of its kind within the PCA), but is not designed for specific ministry recruitment, networking, support and strategy. In short, there is no ministerial fraternal in the PCA concerned to promote some sense of common bonhomie and renew our energy for historic Reformed theology and ministry. This the *Twin Lakes Fellowship* will seek to do, while pursuing positive promotion of church extension and health.

*Creating a Center, Forging a Movement*

So how exactly do we aim both to encourage church planting and to encourage ministers? Well, for example, consider the following. As we gather annually, we will attempt (on the church planting side): (1) to promote a heart for evangelism and church-planting among ministers through emphasis, exhortation and example; (2) to encourage some gifted pastors to consider becoming church planters themselves; (3) to encourage gifted seminarians to consider becoming church planters; (4) to encourage an ordinary means of grace approach in the Gospel ministry of church plants/ers; (5) to bring church planters into direct contact with ministers and elders from potential support churches; to church planters themselves opportunities to report, appeal and instruct, as well as to encourage them in their labors; (6) to bring potential church planters into direct contact with ministers and elders who are looking for church planters for specific works; (7) to bring missionary church planters into direct contact with ministers and elders from potential support churches; generally there will be one missionary church planting ministry represented and the rest will be North American church planting; (8) to address practical issues regarding the export of historic reformed theology and church life in a postmodern, multicultural and pluralistic society; (9) to hear from denominational servants and various presbytery spokesmen about church planting strategies and opportunities; and (10) to produce and disseminate literature and resources (books, pamphlets, video, audio, email list and distribution, and internet-available material) to foster church health and growth in the work of church planting.

On the ministerial encouragement side, we will attempt: (1) to refresh ministers and glorify God through worship and the ministry of the word; (2) to promote a Gospel brotherhood in the work of Christian ministry through fellowship; (3) to encourage disheartened brethren; (4) to introduce to one another committed men with a shared theological vision; (5) to provide for a time of relaxation and recreation for servants of the Lord; (6) to encourage a pan-presbyterian brotherhood by inviting like-minded men from various presbyterian and reformed backgrounds and denominations, both from the region and nation and from around the world; (7) to network with other bodies and organizations for mutual edification, encouragement and stimulation (for example, to interact with groups like the PCA Convocation on Reformation and Revival, Embers to Flame Conferences, the Center for Church Reform, SBTS's C.F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement, etc.); (8) to address at least one critical theological issue per annum, via lecture and discussion, that is impacting the reformed and evangelical community (e.g., "Open Theism" and N.T. Wright); and (9) to promote theological ministry commitments which are biblical and reflective of the solid center of the PCA.

## **II. What is the theological & practical ministry vision of the *Twin Lakes Fellowship*?**

We believe that a biblical theology of ministry needs to be persuasively articulated in our time for church reformation, revitalization and church planting. The theology of ministry we propose is derived from the pastoral epistles themselves and the whole scope of Scriptural teaching, learns from the historic Reformed experience and practice of ministry and church extension, and seeks critically, faithfully and intelligibly to interface with the cultures in which we now live and minister.

We want to see the church grow, but the quality of that growth is as important to us as the quantity. Church health and growth absolutely cannot be separated. We do not seek to promote or countenance a "purer and purer with fewer and fewer" view of faithful ministry, nor however are we satisfied with the pervasive "more relevant than thou" approach to

church growth and Gospel-engagement with the culture. We have no time for an unevangelistic orthodoxy. We are not satisfied with critiques of other modes of church extension without the supply and practice of sound and effective alternatives. We are neither persuaded by Moody (“my wrong way of doing it is better than your right way of not doing it” nor his indolent critics (“its better to do nothing than to do something wrong”). We respond, “do it and do it right!,” and there is a way to do both. We long to see an aggressive view of church ministry and extension that is profoundly biblical and theological, as well as wise and discerning in its cultural analysis.

Our vision for healthy church growth and life comes right out of the past of Presbyterianism and right out of mandates and patterns of ecclesial extension set forth in the Bible. It is thus broad and catholic, rather than narrow and sectarian. It majors on the majors. It refuses to bow the knee to trendiness or to promote an anachronistic ministry. It is consistent with the best of our historic church life and with our Christ-mandated mission, but a new generation will have to be introduced to and embrace this vision if we are to remain a living witness for Christ and grow in vitality as a body of believers.

We seek to encourage church planters and to see churches planted that will be faithful to the following commitments: **ordinary means of grace-based ministry** (an enthusiasm for the ways that God says his Church grows); **expository preaching** (canonical, expositional, applicatory, urgent proclamation); **biblical worship** (reverent, Bible-filled, joyful, historic, Reformed corporate worship – worship that reclaims the psalms alongside our rich traditional hymnody); **biblical theology** (a warm, winsome, exuberant embrace of *Confessional* theology); **a theology of Lord’s Day experience** (a high view of the Lord’s Day, and a promotion of the best discipleship program in the history of Christianity—morning and evening corporate worship); **family worship** (an understanding and promotion of family worship, religion and catechesis); **ministerial piety** (in a day of arid orthodoxy and ungrounded experientialism, a realization that M’Cheyne’s emphasis was right when he said ‘my people’s greatest need is my own holiness’); **a biblical understanding of the Gospel and evangelism** (what you think the Gospel is will determine how you share it); **a biblical understanding of conversion and discipleship** (the way you think God makes a disciple determines how you will go about discipling him); **a biblical understanding of law and sanctification** (it is essential to healthy discipleship that a Christian understand something of the ongoing role of the law in the Christian life—the third use of the law—and the grace dynamic of the Holy Spirit’s uniting of us to Christ by faith, neither of these things should be set over against one another or de-emphasized in the balance of our instruction on Christian growth); **a biblical understanding of church membership and discipline** (when we are united to Christ by faith, we are united to all who are united to Christ by faith; this mutual accountability is visibly manifested in the way we care for, look after, encourage and challenge one another to the life of godliness in the local church; the whole church has an interest in the spiritual health of every individual member, and especially elders as shepherds should seek to promote true Christian discipleship and mutual accountability among the flock); **a biblical understanding of church government and order** (neither Jesus, Luke nor Paul taught that divinely appointed church order was irrelevant to church health and growth, we need to re-believe that); and **a distinctively biblical worldview** (which views the whole creation through the lenses of special revelation and refuses to treat culture as sacrosanct).

### III. Who is the *Twin Lakes Fellowship*?

The *Twin Lakes Fellowship* is made up of a group of ministers and elders of PCA churches, including church planters, along with a few ministerial candidates, potential church planters, missionary church planters, presbyterian and/or reformed friends from sister churches, who will be invited to the annual conference in Jackson. The group will be by invitation only. The group may change or expand year-by-year. It is hoped that a network of cooperation in, information about, mutual encouragement of, and support for PCA church planting will result. The purpose of the group is, we repeat, positive and Spiritual rather than political. It is a grassroots way to foster effective ministry (similar to the *Southwest Area Church Planting Network* promoted by Park Cities Church in Dallas, except without a common budget and with a regular annual meeting).

Among our distinguished ministerial advisors, ruling elder advisors and fraternal representatives are: **Mike Milton**, PhD (PCA), *Senior Minister*, First Presbyterian Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee; **Phil Ryken**, PhD (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; **Bob Cara**, PhD (ARP), *Professor of New Testament and Dean of Faculty*, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina; **Mike Ross** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi; **Terry Johnson**, (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia; **Hywel Jones**, PhD (Welsh Presbyterian) *Professor of Pastoral Theology*, Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California; **Carl Robbins** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church, Simpsonville, South Carolina; **Derek Thomas**, PhD (PCA), *Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology*, Reformed Theological Seminary, and *Minister of Teaching*, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi; **Duncan Rankin**, PhD (PCA), *Professor of Systematic Theology*, Reformed Theological Seminary, and *Minister*, Lebanon Presbyterian Church, Learned, Mississippi; **David Hall** (PCA), *Minister*, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee; **Doug Kelly**, PhD (PCA), *Professor of Systematic Theology*, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina; **David Robertson**, *Minister*, St. Peter's Dundee Free Church of Scotland, Dundee, Scotland; **Will Traub** (PCA), *MTW Missionary*, Gottingen, Germany; **Rick Phillips** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, First Presbyterian Church, Coral Springs [Margate], Florida; **Keith Berger** (PCA), *Campus Minister*, Reformed University Fellowship, Louisiana State, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; **Mike Honeycutt**, PhD (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Southwood Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Alabama; **Carl Kalbercamp** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Pear Orchard Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, Mississippi; **D. James Kennedy**, PhD (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church (PCA), Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; **Claude McRoberts** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Alabama; **Corey Pelton** (PCA), *Church Planter*, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Arkansas; **Gordon K. Reed**, LLD (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Sardinia and New Harmony PCA, Sardinia and Alcolu, South Carolina; **David Sinclair** (PCA), *Senior Minister*, Lexington Presbyterian Church (PCA), Lexington, South Carolina; **R.C. Sproul**, DD (PCA), *President*, Ligonier Ministries, Orlando, Florida; **Alonzo Ramirez** (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Peru), *Minister/Church Planter*, Cajamarca, Peru; **Sebastian Rehnmen**, PhD (Presbyterian Church of Sweden), *Missionary/Church Planter*, Sweden; **Al Mohler**, PhD (Southern Baptist), *President*, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky; **Mark Ross**, PhD (ARP), *Minister of Teaching*, First Presbyterian Church (ARP), Columbia, South Carolina; **Don Breazeale**, *Ruling Elder*, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, Mississippi, Executive Committee Member, Reformed Theological Seminary.

**Ligon Duncan**, *Senior Minister*, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi is the Convener. He was formerly the John R. Richardson Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. He now serves both on the Council of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, of which he is the chairman.

#### **IV. What does the *Twin Lakes Fellowship* do?**

The *Twin Lakes Fellowship* meets once a year for two days at the Twin Lakes Conference Center in Florence, Mississippi for spiritual refreshment, worship, workshops and presentations relating to church health and growth, and the work of church planting. Church planters and missionaries occasionally address the group, as do denominational leaders. Our aim is to be able to host this event at no cost to the invitees once they arrive. This provides added incentive for men to participate (very important in our over-scheduled, over-worked world where we often don't have the time or money for the most important things). We should be able to host up to 300 (and perhaps more) comfortably at this site, once the Conference Center is completed.

Furthermore, throughout the year, through mail, email, fax, phone and personal contact the members of the Twin Lakes Fellowship work to alert one another to promising prospective church planters, promising approved church planters, church planting situations and opportunities, worthy plants in need of funding, those desiring to intern in church planting, and extraordinary funds available for church planting.

#### **V. Why do we need it?**

Five reasons, among many. (1) There are numerous flashy models for church planting and growth vying for the Reformed minister's attention. We believe there is an unrealed harvest of practical truth to be found in the Pauline Pastoral Epistles that yields an ordinary means of grace-based approach to Christian congregational life and discipleship, as well as church extension, that is theologically grounded but flexible enough to work in every culture and circumstance. (2) There are more Mormons in America than Presbyterians! A sense of our relative smallness needs to fuel our humility and temper our American cultural penchant for naive triumphalism, as well as fire our urgency for church extension. (3) Our denomination's MNA can't find enough church planters to meet with the demands. We need, at the local and presbytery level, to be more actively involved in the recruiting, promotion and funding processes of church planting. (4) "Home missions" have never been as glamorous as foreign missions, but you can't do foreign missions without a strong home base. A growing North American base is more conducive the expansion of our foreign missionary work. (5) Church planting, pursued presbyterianly, has the potential of correcting some of the worst idiosyncracies of American evangelicalism. Enough said?

For these reasons and more, ministers (and elders) need to be convinced of the importance of church planting, enthusiastic in its promotion, to consider going into it themselves, and on the lookout for young men with the unique gifts for it.