

# Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Fall 2017  
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Photo: Trina Trotter Nussbaum

## Joining the Holy Spirit in mission



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## The best is yet to come

BY AARON KAUFFMAN  
PRESIDENT

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” —Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)*



It's easy to look at the present landscape of the church in North America and get discouraged. Nearly all denominations are in decline. Young people are increasingly estranged from the church of their parents. And assimilation to dominant American values—whether conservative or progressive—is at an all time high. Where are the streams that God is causing to spring up in what feels like a spiritual wasteland?

I see at least three streams of renewal.

The first stream is the rise of a truly global church. In the Anabaptist family alone, we've grown from 1.3 million in 2003 to 2.1 million today. There are more Anabaptist Christians in Africa than North America, more in Latin America than in Europe. The North American church is not the center of God's movement, and the future of the gospel does not depend on us or our institutions. That is good news! Yet it is also an opportunity for partnership. At VM Missions, many of our mission workers are taking a support role as our global partners lead in mission, whether in the Caribbean, Europe, or Southeast Asia.

A second stream of renewal I see is the growing immigrant population bringing spiritual vitality to our churches here. People from all over the world come to our communities in search of jobs, a better life for their children, or refuge from war and violence. And these immigrants are starting churches. Over the past decade or so in Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC), eight of the twelve churches that have been planted are led by and made up of immigrants. Many of these churches are thriving, including Manantial de Vida, a Spanish-speaking congregation in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In September, they just sent their first mission workers, Francisco and Juanita Machado, to Spain with the help of VM Missions and Mennonite Mission Network.

A third stream of renewal is the growing missional unity across denominational lines here in the United States. Churches of all types are waking up to the fact that this country is a mission field. At VM Missions, we are mobilizing local mission workers within VMC and beyond, to help the church engage our increasingly post-Christian culture. This takes the form of Kids Clubs, prison chaplaincy, human trafficking awareness, church planting, and more. I believe the Holy Spirit is uniting followers of Jesus from across the Christian family who hold together the grace and truth of the gospel with deeds of justice and compassion – the kind of truly evangelical faith that Menno Simons taught – so that we can all more effectively join God's mission together.

The present may appear bleak for the North American church, but God's Spirit never ceases to do new things. May we see with eyes of faith that the best is yet to come.

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## Financial Report

Reporting: 9/1/16 to 8/31/17

Special Projects \$1,224,835	Special Projects \$1,143,406
Mission Fund \$ 855,768	Mission Fund \$829,541
<b>Revenue</b> Total \$2,080,603	<b>Expenses</b> Total \$1,972,947

**Mission Fund:** undesignated giving by households and churches, **Special Projects:** giving to specific workers or ministries

## Transforming

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## Worker Support Thai fundraising dinner is November 2

Enjoy delicious Thai food and support the ministry of VMissions workers Steve Horst and Bethany Tobin at an authentic Thai meal on Thursday, November 2, 6:00–7:30 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church. Steve and Bethany and their children will join us to share food, fellowship, news and stories from their ministry in Thailand. No charge; donations are encouraged to support Steve and Bethany's third term of service.

## VMissions New logo, mission, vision and strategic priorities



Although our name remains the same, you may see the logo above in greater usage on our displays and in print. As we have refined our mission and vision, we are streamlining our visual identity with a simpler reference to VMissions, like our website: [vmmissions.org](http://vmmissions.org).

**Mission:** VMissions equips the church to share new life in Jesus Christ with neighbors near and far.

**Vision:** VMissions envisions a Spirit-filled church of many cultures living out God's kingdom in every sphere of life.

### Strategic Priorities:

1. Join the Holy Spirit's work of renewing and growing the church.
2. Partner in equipping and sending workers from anywhere to anyone.
3. Cultivate the next generation of global missional leaders.
4. Equip disciples to engage work as witness.
5. Nurture a culture of healthy church multiplication.

## festival of praise

### Annual *a cappella* benefit concert on November 5

Join us at Eastern Mennonite School's auditorium on November 5 at 4:00 p.m. for the 17th annual Festival of Praise, a worshipful benefit concert of men's *a cappella* singing groups. Ten groups will perform several songs separately, and then will combine together in a finale. An offering will be taken to benefit the ministries of VMissions.



### Donors & Prayer Partners Appreciation banquet is November 18

As a small token of our gratitude for the ways in which you have prayed earnestly and given generously to the work that God is doing through VMissions, Mission Fund donors and Prayer Partners are invited to a banquet of appreciation on November 18 in the Fellowship Hall of Park View Mennonite Church (1600 Park Rd., Harrisonburg, Va.)

The meal will begin at 6:30 p.m. Afterwards, VMissions staff will share a short presentation of our current ministries and what God is doing in our midst.

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# ● Local mission on the map

In this issue, we consider how we live into our stated priority of “joining the Holy Spirit’s work of renewing and growing the church.” As Director of USA Ministries, Skip Tobin is well-positioned to see the exciting things that are happening as he works to resource and mobilize congregations in mission.

BY SKIP TOBIN

A world map graces the walls of the VMissions conference room. Colored pins mark particular spots on the various continents, and strings trace the connection to particular VMissions workers. However, we have had to adjust our pinning practice to accommodate the reality of an otherwise very dense cluster of 8 pins in virtually the same spot: 10 joy-filled, energized local mission workers:

- **Alfonso Alvarado** is in a church planting assignment with Iglesia Menonita Monte Moriah
- **Tyler and Kendra Yoder** are preparing for an Eastside church plant in Richmond, Va.
- **Marvin Lorenzana** is directing Mennonite Hispanic Initiative
- **Caitlin Tice** counteracts human trafficking with New Creation in Harrisonburg, Va.
- **Seth and Theresa Crissman** are working with churches to offer Kids Clubs
- **Jason Wagner** is working as a chaplain at the Harrisonburg/Rockingham Regional Jail
- **Chris Beck** is working with LOVE INC (In the Name of Christ) in Staunton, Va.
- **Taryn Zander** is helping VMissions formulate a response to the refugee crisis

So how can we account for this bubbling up of the new in our local context? The source, I realize, is the Spirit of God energizing us—the church—in mission. As an agency, we are simply discovering ways to align ourselves with what God is already doing.

Through what we call *Cultivate*, we have been providing a variety of tools which help us to be intentional about discipleship. Why? Because when we are intentional about developing the very character and competencies of Jesus as his disciples, we soon find ourselves learning to join Jesus in his mission.

For example, I have been inviting pastors and rising leaders into “huddles.” Here, the clear agenda over months of meeting together is that our lives will be reshaped around two questions: “What is God saying?” and “What am I going to do about it?” Folks experience being disciplined themselves and gain familiarity with simple tools to

disciple others. From this simple center comes the capacity to engage the world in mission: not striving out of heavy, joyless obligation, but, rather, joining God’s mission as part of our DNA as Jesus’ disciples.

Marvin Lorenzana is a prime example of how fruitful huddles have been. He has carried his own Spanish-language version of huddles into his vast network of relationships with passionate Hispanic leaders, many of whom carry vision for church planting. Some of these leaders are in turn raising up a new batch of missional leaders. Through Marvin’s relationships with leaders such as Alfonso Alvarado, and the resources that

**Phil Kniss, pastor of Park View Mennonite Church, creates a balloon animal at a neighborhood Kids Club Block Party.**

Photo by Trina Trotter Nussbaum



*Our lives will be reshaped around two questions: "What is God saying?" and "What am I going to do about it?"*

flow through those relationships, we are helping to bring their church planting dreams into reality. God is moving among our Latino brothers and we have the opportunity to get in on the life!

Alfonso is the first Hispanic church planter to be launched under a new "Covenant Partnership for New Church Initiatives" model. God virtually dropped the model into my lap when I was attending a workshop by David Boshart, Mennonite Church USA's new Moderator, at a church planting event. At the workshop, he presented an outline of the model which we have adapted and begun to use.

The Covenant Partnerships model is proving to be very helpful. In the past, there have been multiple examples of church planters beginning too quickly, with too little support—relationally and financially. Now, the bar is being set higher for both the church planter and existing partnering congregations.

The covenant partnership that we co-create specifies the responsibilities for the church planter, the partnering congregations and VMissions. The beauty of this is the mutual blessing for everyone involved.

We envision church planters bringing fresh vision and much needed passion to established congregations who can recognize their need for renewed confidence in the gospel. And we see established congregations bringing a spiritual heritage, a grounding in scripture, and a readiness to bless new churches, financially and otherwise.

It's been lovely to see this very dynamic in action between Alfonso's new church plant, Iglesia Menonita Monte Moriah, and the Northern District churches that gather around in support.

Another aspect of our shift within USA Ministries is that we are inviting local workers into a season of employment as VMissions workers. This means that we



At Park View Mennonite Church's Kids Club Block Party, Michaela Mast teaches Sarah Keim (left) and Hannah Mast steps to a song. Photo by Trina Trotter Nussbaum

can prioritize training, ongoing resourcing, regular mentoring, and the bolstered sense of identity as "sent ones" that these often bi-vocational folks really appreciate.

Seth Crissman shares, "Let me tell you, it's been incredible. If the seed of God's good news is sown into us as soil, VMissions has provided a raised bed to hold us, our soil and our work as we allow God's word to take root in our hearts."

These things that we provide are, however, only part of the story. Another big, beautiful part is played by the Ministry Support Teams (MSTs) that form around each worker. I have been particularly awed by the level of loving, practical support pouring out from these teams! Regular heartfelt prayer, faithful financial giving and practical care have been flowing out with passion.

I am excited about all that is happening within VMissions USA Ministries: my daily interactions with workers and prospective workers, the requests for tranSend interns from local pastors, the interaction with district leaders regarding their missional hopes, the ground work of discipling that happens in my coaching contexts and in the many huddles that have been launched.

Most of all, I am full of gratitude to God for not abandoning his church, but for giving us his heart and allowing us to partner with him in what he is doing.

See the back page for an overview of the *Cultivate* program.

*Skip Tobin is Director of USA Ministries for VMissions.*

# ● A shared heartbeat for mission

Eastside Church in Harrisonburg, Va., shares a commitment with VMissions to the sustainable multiplication of disciples, leaders, and churches. To date, this has meant sending eight persons in mission assignments with VMissions.

BY PETER EBERLY

I am a big picture guy and I'm passionate about the church! I believe the clearest call we receive as followers of Jesus is to become his disciples. As I study discipleship, it seems clear that a disciple makes disciples, who in turn make disciples!

If the church is made up of disciples, then everything we are part of should replicate: disciples who can make disciples, small groups who can make new small groups, churches that can plant churches. I have missional dreams that from Eastside would come churches in many locations—in Virginia and along the entire East Coast. That replication process must begin with individual disciples.

We have seen that vision beginning by raising up eight workers who carry an affiliation with VMissions. I have no idea how many we will have in the next five years, but it seems like those numbers will continue to multiply!

We have been walking with VMissions for eight years now. Our clear commitment to the Lordship of Christ and our agreed outcome of disciple multiplication has made for a wonderful partnership. Because of our core values, we have been able to extend flexibility to each other as we develop strategies.

Not that it's always smooth! Skip Tobin, VMissions Director of USA Ministries, and I have had a couple of heated debates along the way. But the heart connection—the shared heartbeat for God's mission—is solid enough to keep our partnership moving forward.

I've noticed that missional dreamers like myself often get pinned to the wall with questions of "How?" and "Why?" But I have discovered that VMissions knows how to listen to our dreams and say "Wow!" They then move on with great competence in figuring out the "how."

The fact is, all of the things that we are doing are new things, requiring this kind of flexibility, creativity and competence. VMissions is providing the scaffolding, the functional frameworks that enable these new things to happen.

When you are in pioneering work with the next generation, you have to be willing to take risks and experiment with the new. Having a partnership and connection with VMissions increases the likelihood of not only fruitful current ministry, but sustainable long-term multiplication. A connection with VMissions assures that there will be sustainable multiplication of those gifts and investments, priorities carried forward over the long haul.



**Tyler and Kendra Yoder** are Eastside church planting interns and VMissions appointed workers:

*"Eastside is dedicated to planting churches and seeing new believers come into life-changing intimacy with Jesus. This dedication, coupled with VMissions' commitment, proves to us that there are people who are sold on the vision of planting new churches to reach new people with the gospel. They are not just committed to supporting a couple of Mennonite people with a lofty vision, but are committed to the vision of reaching new people with the gospel."*

*Eastside is giving us a lot of opportunities to experience leadership in a faith community, experience and study effective ways of doing outreach. It is a comfort and an encouragement to know that we are not in ministry alone, but that all of God's people can join together to carry out God's mission."*



**Seth and Theresa Crissman**, members of Eastside, help churches reach their neighbors with the good news:

*"Our work is not in one church but with several across our region. It seems that this kind of outside-of-the-box, between-the-cracks, reimagining of how we are the church is timely. Without Eastside's support and VMissions' willingness to rethink paradigms and retool, there would not be structures to hold the work that we are doing. And we are seeing fruit...the fruit of neighbors who know and care for each other, the fruit of churches who are welcoming others with radical hospitality and investing in caring for and empowering those with little voices. The fruit we are seeing in our local neighborhoods and the nine churches in which we have helped to start Kids Clubs is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst."*



**Multiplying disciples:** Eastside Church Lead Pastor Peter Eberly (left) and Associate Pastor Matt Schwartz (right) with VMissions workers (l-r) Taryn Zander, serving in global refugee short-term missions, and Tyler and Kendra Yoder, serving at 264 OSH, a house ministry primarily building relationships with college students for outreach and discipleship.

Photo courtesy of author

Right from the beginning, the Lord directed us to give 10% of our budget to VMissions. We knew then what we have experienced now: churches send. We didn't have anyone to send yet, so we invested in those who already were sent. We chose to invest before we could envision any fruit or benefit coming back to us. But no kingdom seed is sown without return, and now we are reaping benefit in this relationship.

It isn't only money that we have chosen to invest. We have also invested resources into developing leaders. We want to be poised for the opportunities that God brings our way. I used to think that recruiting leaders involved creating the perfect job description. I've learned that this isn't true. Leaders can be recruited, but more often leaders are created through discipleship.

I've had the joy of walking with and training the next generation of leaders and planters at Eastside Church! Tyler and Kendra Yoder, for example, experienced the call to church planting when they were least expecting it. It wasn't there in the beginning.

Beyond that, we have to be willing to release the folks that we disciple. We are preparing to send Tyler and Kendra Yoder away. Likewise, we have chosen to release Seth and Theresa Crissman to be a blessing to the wider church

community. They are helping area churches give and receive the good news in their neighborhoods primarily through the establishment of Kids Clubs.

While we experience a sense of loss as we maintain this posture, it also provides space for the next generation of leaders at Eastside Church to take their place.

This is risky. There are those who feel frustrated that as a church we aren't focused sufficiently on meeting the needs within our congregation. But, I don't want to be a hospice station! The church is made up of disciples who make disciples, not spectators who take up seat space. I feel that we have to be externally focused. And the fact is, there are "high asks" for things that have kingdom value.

I trust the tranSend program because of this—because there is a high discipleship demand and high commitment coupled with flexible environments for exploring ministry gifts.

As we do our dreaming and allow the Holy Spirit to ignite our imaginations, it is great to have an agency partner like VMissions to carry the dreams forward with competence and creativity.

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*Peter Eberly is Lead Pastor of Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va.*

## Empowering congregations for mission in Trinidad

BY LOREN HORST

**H**ow does one re-enter a church and culture where outsiders are no longer significantly needed and the missionary role is a thing of the past? And how does one cooperate with what God is doing in ways that strengthen local bodies of believers and nurture their own missional impulses? There are times to lead, times to follow, and times to stay out of the way. Which of these, or what combination of them, would describe our year of service in Trinidad?

The Trinidad church has deep appreciation for the many VMissions missionaries who served in key church planting and leadership roles in the past. However, our assignment was different. We were invited as guests for one year. While VMissions added their “appointment,” we answered primarily to the president of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago (MCTT), Deolal Ramdial.

As guests, we attempted to respect our hosts, do what we were asked to do, and not stay too long. We broke up our year in sojourns of four to 10 weeks.

We were invited to work with leaders and spent much of our time doing so. When relating to other church members and people in the communities we continually directed persons back to their own leaders. This was not difficult because we truly respect these women and men God has called. We rejoiced to hear of these same feelings expressed



Deolal Ramdial, president of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago. Courtesy of author

on a regular basis by the local believers, “I appreciate our leaders”, “I love my pastor” or “I enjoy my church.” When people are asked who was a spiritual mentor to them it is now not unusual to hear the name of a fellow Trinidadian church member.

We understood clearly that God’s Spirit and local people are the ones entrusted with the life and leadership of the church. Bible study and prayer are common in the Trinidad church and in virtually all church related functions. Fasting is not unusual. It is common to be reminded of our reliance on God.

Miracles are expected, and mostly the miracle of changed lives! It is common to recognize God’s activity in the daily events of life, in the midst of human relationships.

Loren was asked to facilitate a committee’s review of MCTT’s organizational structure which over time seemed to be burdensome. This past summer, a new structure was adopted, intended to simplify MCTT organization and unleash congregations for mission. At the same conference in August, the church embraced the challenge of their own leaders—that ministry is the responsibility of all members—with a theme, “Each One Reach One.”

Early in our year a leader suggested restarting the Pastors Fellowship. We lent our encouragement to this idea with the conviction that mutually caring and supportive relationships among leaders is one of the foundations of building Christ’s church. The group meets monthly, and spouses are invited. Sometimes we were present and sometimes not. Fellowship, food, fun, laughter, encouragement and prayer fill these times together.

We worked with the conviction that, with few exceptions, God provides the local gifts and leadership necessary for congregations of God’s people to fully do God’s work. We tried to avoid the role of rescuer when confronted with difficult questions or circumstances. Because we have seen leaders mature significantly in the crucibles of trials and tribulation, we repeatedly directed persons to participate in solving their own challenges.

The Trinidad church has a future that is increasingly articulated and anticipated as their own. They have drawn back from the slogan a few years ago, “Totally Local.” They say it was premature and too limiting. While not their words, I would say they could adopt a more current slogan, admittedly more cumbersome, “Totally dependent on God, but interdependent within God’s global family.”



Trinidadian church leaders and families, and Loren Horst (third from left) pray for pastor Navin Benny (kneeling) at this year’s MCTT conference. Courtesy of author

*Loren Horst and his wife Earlene served in Trinidad, consulting in leadership development and organizational processes.*

# Jamaican Mennonite leaders go to the highways and byways

BY LYNN SUTER

*A conversation with Dameon Hines, pastor of Ocho Rios Mennonite Church and Director of Missions for Jamaica Mennonite Church (JMC), as recorded by Lynn Suter, VMissions' Director of Operations and International Ministries. Pastor Hines is bi-vocational, working full-time as principal at a 600-student primary school located over an hour's commute from his home.*

Lynn Suter: Where are you seeing signs of the Holy Spirit's movement within Jamaica Mennonite Church?

Dameon Hines: At Ocho Rios Mennonite, we are seeing persons really trusting in the Lord, praying for healing, being empowered in their lives, caring for one another, and having passion for people outside the church.

The leaders of our children's program have begun going into unregulated neighborhoods after church services on Sunday. These are overcrowded, violent areas with lots of children and youth. Instead of inviting them to our church, where they will not necessarily want to come, we are going to them. This is what Jesus did, and he calls us to go to the highways and byways as well. This is happening not because I am pressuring people. It is flowing out of love and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

LS: Do you see the potential for your congregation to multiply through this outreach?

DH: Yes! These outreaches have potential for church planting. Some in our congregation grew up in these neighborhoods. Right now, once a month, we are going as a team to talk with persons on the street, particularly young men. We can talk about conflict resolution as ones who know the Prince of Peace. As Mennonites, we have a unique witness. We are praying as we go, asking the Lord to show us how to approach people with love.

LS: In what ways does investment into this ministry and potential church planting feel risky?

DH: In management of my time. I feel that my true calling is in full-time pastoral ministry and the planting of churches. But, being bi-vocational, I have limited time for new ministry, and even pastoral care of my existing congregation, and time with my wife and daughter, or for myself, can run out. I have to be consistently delegating.

LS: Do you have leaders in training?

DH: Yes. From day one, we've been training leaders for ministry, guiding them in Bible study, giving them chances to teach, preach and go into the street to talk with persons, encouraging them in their lifestyle, and helping them identify their gifts. And for all our members, I consistently preach:



Pastor Dameon Hines attended the Exponential 2017 church planting conference in Orlando, Fla. He is pictured here with a group from Eastside Church: (from left) Matt Schwartz, Sara Bare, Chris Bare, Kendra Yoder, Tyler Yoder, Dameon Hines, Peter Eberly, Natalie Eberly and author Lynn Suter. Courtesy of author

*Just as someone shared the gospel with you, you must share it with others.*

LS: How has VMissions been an encouragement, and what more can we do?

DH: VMissions has been a tremendous blessing through personal relationship and encouragement. Also in providing grants for leadership development, including sending me to church planting conferences [i.e., Exponential in Florida] which is so eye opening for me and equips me to communicate back to JMC.

When future churches are planted, we could use help with tents or material for new roofs—not for ongoing support, because we teach our members to give tithes and offerings—but initially.

We are also still working on VMissions' offer to partner with Jamaica through tranSend. We want to use this as a way to release emerging leaders into ministry, particularly in remote locations like Salters Hill and Ridge. But we need people willing to go, to take up the cross of serving in places that are not comfortable.

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*Lynn Suter is Director of Operations and International Ministries for Virginia Mennonite Missions.*

# Call to Prayer: Worthwhile work

BY CAROL TOBIN

This summer, Skip and I had the rare privilege of a “perfect” vacation. We enjoyed perfectly elegant accommodations (compliments of my brother, in his vacation home) in a perfectly spectacular setting of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. We enjoyed perfectly delightful weather and even had a perfect view of the total eclipse. We had every recreational opportunity at our fingertips and assiduously avoided talking about “work.” However, as wonderful and needful as was this rest time, I felt hollow inside. Even my prayer life seemed to go strangely quiet, with only gentle bubbles of rather lazy appreciation for beauty springing to the surface of my heart throughout the days.

The fact is, you and I were made for work! Not just the work we do in exchange for a pay check, but the common vocation we engage because we have given our lives to the Lord Jesus. In giving our lives to Jesus, we discover that there is something that our Lord wants us to do. One of those things he wants us to do is to pray. And despite the volumes written and sermons preached, if I am to be honest, there is nothing in my Christian life quite as challenging and counter-intuitive as this work of prayer.



The Ministry Support Team of Mark and Sarah Schoenhals pray blessings for their return to Thailand, where they serve with VMissions and Eastern Mennonite Missions. Photo by author



At a retreat for workers this summer, prayer time for each other was an important part of a very meaningful experience. Photo by author

In what sense is prayer work? I would not argue that it is work because something is accomplished by virtue of our doing it. If prayer had some sort of straightforward causal function, it would suggest that we, rather than God, were in the driver’s seat. Not so! Prayer for me is work because it is a vigorous expression of belief and belief is hard work.

In John 6, when the disciples ask Jesus what they must do to do the works of God, Jesus says “believe in the one he has sent.” When we pray, we are joining the likes of blind Bartemaues who cried out with importunity as Jesus passed on the road, “Lord, have mercy upon me!” We entreat and implore because we can’t fix the things that are wrong. Yet, there is nothing weak and pathetic about the prayers we direct towards our Lord. To turn to God in prayer is not the same as shrugging our shoulders and saying nothing can be done. No! Our prayer is a faith stand—a vigorous expression of confidence, an insistence that God is indeed the one before whom our complaint and appeal must be laid. And

even more challenging is the sobering realization that we have been commissioned by the Lord Jesus himself to not only cry out our appeal, but to carry his very authority in prayer!

I am so grateful for the culture of prayer that surrounds me at VMissions. My days are peppered with morning and evening prayer times with members of worker MSTs who gather to pray for their workers. Our training and retreat events are structured so as to allow prayer to be a prominent piece of what we do together. We pray as a staff. We have made it a priority to grow in our capacity as a staff to listen to the Holy Spirit and be brave to pray prayers with a prophetic edge. As with any kind of work, our capacity increases as we engage it on a consistent basis. There is no more meaningful and important work to be done! Lord, what prayer work do you want me to do?



Carol Tobin is Asia Regional Director and Content Editor of Transforming.



David and Rebekka Stutzman with their children (from left) Liana, Nathanael and Immanuel. Photo courtesy of David Stutzman

## Worker profile: **David and Rebekka Stutzman**

**Service program:** Long-term  
(in partnership with the organizations listed below)

### **Assignment:**

Through a partnership among the southern German Mennonite Church, VMissions and Mennonite Mission Network, we were sent to Mannheim, Germany, to start a new church community. It has been our home for over a year now. As “sent ones,” we are focused on living out faith in our daily lives, loving our neighbors, and working out what it means to be a missional community. We try to be incarnational, following the way of Jesus in our neighborhood. We see relationships as the main focus of our ministry and try to lead a lifestyle that is open and attentive to friendships, hospitality, and opportunities to serve others. We seek God’s guidance and presence in the everyday things that we experience and do.

### **Biggest challenge:**

Living out a missional lifestyle and creating a new community from scratch can make it hard to define a regular structure to our time. We are learning to be flexible and patient, trusting that God has us here for a reason as we await the fruit that God will bring from our lives. We see how significant it is to simply get to know people and become involved in their lives.

### **Biggest joy:**

Our children. As parents of three (ages 5, 4, and 2), we are kept on our toes and much of our life is spent as domestic engineers. Furthermore, we are pleased at how integrated our family life is with our calling. Be it at the playground, the park, swim lessons, baseball practice, birthday parties, these every day activities become bridges into friendships. The children are closely connected to our ministry; our family life is in many ways the center of our ministry life. Through our

children’s activities, we are able to relate authentically.

### **A typical day:**

With three little kids, a typical day is full of routines centered around child care. Starting with getting three energetic, sometimes grumpy, kids dressed and out the door to Kindergarten, we will then have different tasks at home or meetings in the city for the morning. In the afternoon, one of us works in a nearby city at an afterschool program for needy kids. (This social work position is part of our bi-vocational approach to mission.) The other parent picks up the kids from Kindergarten and may do an activity with them like riding bikes in the park or baseball practice. Most days this is not done alone but involves hanging out with another family. We usually have something going on in the evenings. Rebekka might lead a women’s small group; Dave might meet up with people downtown, or be involved in a discipleship session.



**Virginia  
Mennonite  
Missions**

*Called. Sent. Transformed.*

Transforming (USPS-15280)  
Virginia Mennonite Missions  
601 Parkwood Drive  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2498

# Cultivate

*Cultivate* provides resources and relationships for making disciples, equipping missional leaders and joining the movement that Jesus began.

## Exploring

### Equipping resource events

- regular training events and seminars focused on missional leadership

### Lending library

- a variety of books available with a missional church focus

### Evangelistic Bible studies

- accessible Bible studies for those who are not yet followers of Jesus

## Multiplying

### transPlant

- local missionaries partnering with congregations

### “Approved Ministry” status

- provides a way to enable new ministries to begin who are doing like-minded mission

## Overflowing

### Huddles

- a leadership/discipleship vehicle for learning and practicing community

### Local tranSend internships

- matching interns with missional mentors and communities

## Growing

### Life Transformation Groups

- a peer, same-gender accountability group

### Coaching missional leaders

- individual and group training for missional leadership

### Congregational consulting

- resourcing church ministry teams to move forward in mission



One pinpoint on the map, eight individuals, couples or families serving in local assignments emerging from VMissions partnerships with congregations and districts.

## Can we partner with you too?

How can we help you to explore, grow, overflow and multiply?

Let's talk together about the hopes that God is giving you and your congregation for mission in your local context!



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**VMissions**  
USA Ministries

*Making disciples in the way of Christ*

[vmmissions.org/get-involved/  
usa-ministries/cultivate/](http://vmmissions.org/get-involved/usa-ministries/cultivate/)