

Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Fall 2018
VOLUME 4 • ISSUE 3



A culture of multiplication



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 **VMissions**

A culture of multiplication

BY LYNN SUTER

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES



I well remember the church building where my family worshipped when I was a child. Our pastor's wife occasionally babysat my sister and me in their adjoining parsonage, so we, with the pastor's two daughters, played in the building by the hours, scurrying from belfry to basement.

In my young mind, that beloved building was the church. The childhood rhyme, "Here's the church, and here's the steeple; open the doors and see all the people," was a tidy description of church for me.

Fifty years later, church is no longer tidy. For starters, my husband and I worship in a school auditorium which I'm sure is not a church. My work at VMissions regularly presses me and my colleagues and our workers into the contested question, "What is church?" And if that weren't hard enough to discern in the far-flung corners of Asia, postmodern Europe, and, increasingly, the United States, we also wrestle with "How do you multiply it?" More than once, my aching mind has come to rest only on the assurance that whatever the church is, Jesus has promised to build it.

If you were asked, "What are the irreducible minimums of the church?" what would you say? An assembly of some number? What number? A pattern of assembling? What's the pattern and what mission and values would it reflect? Beyond discerning that biblically and agreeing what church should be for a particular context, how would you multiply it? Would you "launch large," plant house churches or "missional communities," "swarm off" of existing churches, or something else?

For boomers like myself, these questions can seem irrelevant – we think we know what church is and we hear about the occasional church plant. But these questions are not irrelevant to our children, too many of whom have answered by leaving the church, but some of whom are running hard after a better version of the bride of Christ than Christendom modeled. One less self-satisfied, cloistered and busy with its own affairs.

As you read the church planting articles in this edition of *Transforming*, notice how each writer is attempting to answer these questions. And consider the questions for your own church family, particularly the question of multiplication. Jesus is building his church, inviting in those who were once far off (Eph. 2:13). How are your patterns in discipling, Bible studies, small groups, worship and service extending Jesus' invitation to far-off persons and teaching them to do the same? May God open the doors of our hearts and enable us to "see all the people" he longs to bring together into his family, the church!

Cover photo: David Stutzman (right), VMissions worker in Germany, meets with his friend Uwe for discipleship and Bible study at a nearby kebab restaurant. Read David's article on pages 4-5.

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17th annual Festival of Praise is November 4

Festival of Praise, an *a cappella* concert of men's singing groups and a finale of combined voices, will be held on Sunday, November 4, 4:00 p.m. at Eastern Mennonite School's Auditorium, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg. An offering will benefit Virginia Mennonite Missions. For more information, contact: (540) 434-9727 or info@vmmissions.org

SINGING GROUPS:

Bridgebuilders • Cantore • H.M.C. Men's Chorus • Inner Harmony • Jubilee Singers P.V.M.C. Men's Ensemble • Senior Sound Striking Accord • UMAC • Vintage Mix



Marvin Lorenzana, MHI Director

MHI 10th Anniversary Reception is November 9

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Mennonite Hispanic Initiative (MHI). God's faithfulness has allowed fruit in all three of MHI's priorities: church planting, theological education, and leadership development. Two Spanish-speaking VMC faith communities have been planted and one more is underway. The Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA) is about to graduate its third group of students. Resource events are offered to develop mission-minded leaders.

As Marvin Lorenzana, who has faithfully served as MHI Director, transitions to focus his work with Mennonite Mission Network, this good work will be carried forward, with VMissions support and leadership under the banner of Latino Ministries, which Lizzette Hernandez is now leading as the Latino Ministries Coach.

2018 Alternative Christmas Gift projects announced

Fund/Worker	Gift	Qty Desired	Price	Location
Stutzman	German Mennonite Hymnal	12	\$45	Germany
Schoenhals	Bibles for new believers	30	\$12	Thailand
Schoenhals	Transport costs for village evangelism and discipleship	30	\$15/trip	Thailand
Shahini	Science lab for LAC	50	\$20	Albania
Teles	Guitar & amp for Joshua Center	12	\$25	Albania
Green	Neighborhood hospitality	12	\$20	Italy
Campbell	Samaritan's Purse Christmas	100	\$5	Montenegro
Ramella	"Night of Blessing" for women	30	\$3	Kosovo
Joshua Center	Sponsor a child	12	\$40/mo.	Albania
Horst	Fresh fruit for refugees in detention center	12	\$10	Thailand

God is on the move of multiplication in Thailand

How can we have an issue devoted to multiplication without sharing what workers Mark and Sarah Schoenhals and Steve and Bethany Horst are reporting about Life Enrichment Church (LEC) in Thailand? After a church planting training, LEC set a goal of "100 in 2 months." Our workers share:

The Lord Jesus is showing himself powerful and trustworthy, and many are being drawn to him. Those who come are finding remarkable freedom, protection, and love that they never knew possible! Forty people moving from being seekers to learners to believers in six weeks' time is pretty amazing! After forty, we've become less conscientious about the counting!

Paw Saweng, a new Jesus-follower, decided to get rid of every idol and amulet he owned. Immediately, the eye drainage which he had experienced for a long time, and which the doctors could not treat, suddenly stopped—and didn't return.

In an area where there were no known Christians, a young man died

after a demonic attack. This occurrence was not new in his family or village. When a Christian relative and his friends from LEC arrived on the scene, a rather dramatic, several-day spiritual battle ensued. The demons fled. An entire extended family believed, and were all baptized.

A new believer who is a soldier-like park ranger in the wild and dangerous area along the Thai-Cambodia border is being seriously harassed for his new faith by his co-workers. A superior left him to lead a small group of men out of an area deep in the forest that is a maze of landmines. He trusted the Lord to guide him, and all returned to civilization unharmed.

In August, Nam Yuen became the third distinct district within LEC, with its own monthly celebration gathering, and responsibility for evangelism, follow-up and leadership development. Teams of twos and threes have been going out to visit and teach the ten people who are on the journey. Our fellowship is about 20 strong now!

● New ways of being church



David and Rebekka are exploring new ways of being church in post-Christian Germany. In their multicultural context of Mannheim, they have started a missional community.

BY DAVID STUTZMAN

I was in Netherlands when I experienced the startling “Aha” moment that propelled me into my call to mission in the Western context. It was the early 2000s. I was a young volunteer serving in Germany, attending a European Mennonite Missions conference.

For the first time, I heard a sobering proclamation of the state of affairs in post-Christian Europe from the lips of a Dutch conference minister as he welcomed us to the opening gathering. Unvarnished and mournfully, he chronicled the steady decline of the Dutch Mennonite church over the course of a half century, plummeting from 90,000 to 12,000 members. He spoke of the alarming increase in median age and of watching in bewilderment the exodus of the younger generations.

“We are dying,” he said, “We need to be talking about mission.”

It was a clear God moment in my life. It is why my wife and I are now church planters who are face-to-face with the huge cultural shifts that have been happening and will continue to happen. Whereas the church, for better or worse, was once at the center of culture, it is now experiencing loss of status, influence, and presence.

Yet, because the fact that the “weather” has changed has not been fully grasped, churches still function as they always have, with little change in their posture or practices of relating to the communities around them. In post-Christian contexts such as ours in Germany, the church is no longer connected to the people around them.

While there is much to lament, this shift gives us a chance to reflect on and rediscover our vocation and identity. Instead of asking, “Why aren’t people coming to our church? Where is the younger generation? What is the future of the church?” we need to be asking, “Where is God at work? How can we participate in what God is doing in this context? What are we inviting people to be part of?”

These are the questions we have been asking since we began this adventure of forming a new church community in Mannheim, Germany.



The logo for Emmaus Gemeinschaft contains symbols for the bread and cup. Provided by David Stutzman

Two years ago, we moved here with the vision of starting a new church community and exploring new expressions of church in a post-Christian context. Along the way, we have learned much about living out faith in a secularized and spiritually-privatized society and have rolled up our sleeves to experiment with how church community can be missional, reproducible, and contextual.

We have started a missional community, meeting as a house church, which we call *Emmaus Gemeinschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* means community or fellowship in German, and the name comes from the Emmaus story at the end of the Gospel of Luke.

Two disciples are on the way to Emmaus, processing their thoughts and the dramatic events in Jerusalem. They are joined by Jesus, who accompanies them, engages them, and finally reveals himself in the breaking of bread together. This story of Jesus meeting us in the midst of life’s circumstances inspires our vision for church. We expect to meet Jesus on the way and in the breaking of bread.

There are a few keys that have emerged through our experience during the last several years.

We have learned the importance of presence. As community, we seek to integrate faith into our everyday lives, serve our neighbors, embody and teach discipleship. We are inspired by an incarnational approach to church, one where presence has become an essential concept for our understanding of church. To be incarnational we must live our faith where we are at. We meet in public spaces and do Bible study in kebab shops. We go to the park on Sunday mornings to work out with our neighbors and organize events for our neighborhood. We try to place relationships at the center of our community activity.

We invite people into table fellowship. We have learned that we have to be clear about what we are inviting people into. Unless we intentionally ask ourselves this question, we may find ourselves hoping that people will attend worship and eventually become active members, participating in church in the ways that seem so familiar and intuitive to those of us who grew up in a traditional church culture. We have to wake up and realize that our Sunday





Friends and neighbors of Rebekka Stutzman (center) and David were invited to go hiking, with a picnic lunch. “We try to naturally include people into the activities of our community life,” said David. Photo: David Stutzman

culture, our liturgies, and our love affair with committees don’t make much sense to the uninitiated! Thus, from the onset we wanted to keep things simple, easy to model, and easy to have others participate in or imitate.

For us it starts with the table. We take our inspiration from the early church and the weight given to the table as the center of fellowship, worship, and communion. Thus, we see the table as the space and time where people experience hospitality and belonging. Relationships deepen. We live out discipleship with the Lord’s Supper.

Table fellowship can also be replicated in many different situations; it brings an integration of social and sacred life. It has been exciting for us to see how God can be at work around so many different kinds of tables: at home around the dining room or kitchen table, at restaurants, cafes, and as we gather for picnics.

We envision church as a network. Church is a network of relationships cen-

tered on following Jesus together. While we work at that locally, we want to encourage a movement of people on a mission together. Rather than being a community in isolation or a centralized commuter community, we call ourselves a “Netzwerk Kirche”, a network church.

Every four to six weeks we gather for worship with others from the region who are also interested in exploring and practicing missional living in their own neighborhoods and cities. It is a time of celebration and mutual encouragement. We hear about what God has been doing in our lives and in our communities. Rather than clumping together as Christians, we continuously practice this gathering and sending rhythm, blessing one another for serving in and relating to our own contexts.

This coming year, we are going to develop resources and offer training for creating missional communities. We are extremely grateful for God’s presence in this venture of seeing a new and alive version of Christian community emerge in our generation!



A table set with German snacks, ready to host neighbors and friends in warm Christian hospitality. Photo: David Stutzman

David Stutzman serves with VMissions in Mannheim, Germany, with his wife Rebekka and three children, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network.

● This building is home to a story

Dr. Art McPhee reflects on what God has taught him and his wife, Evie, through their experience as church planters.



BY ARTHUR (ART) MCPHEE

We are used to speaking of the mission of the church. But in the book of Acts, the church is caught up in the mission of God. The mission is God's, not ours. Our role is to participate in what God is doing, to work alongside God through evangelism, discipling, and church planting.

How we participate in God's mission requires discernment. Two questions are key. The first question is, "What would Jesus do?" We depend on studying Jesus' teaching and example in Scripture to help us see that. But because Jesus is alive and at work in the church, not just a historical figure, we must also ask, "What is Jesus doing?" For this, we depend on prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit!

Because new churches emerge in a wide range of settings, and because they contain believers with different experiences, gifts, and personalities, no new congregation will be like any other. Churches are not clones. Therefore, we should not presume that God wants us to always follow familiar patterns of church planting or to become champions of church planting fads. There are no sacrosanct methods of church planting nor forms of church.

To show that, let me give a quick summary of two church start-ups my wife, Evie, and I were involved with in the 1980s in the Boston area.

The first church began as a prayer fellowship in the living room of our apartment. Each week, we gathered to pray for God's direction and to pray for each other, unsaved friends and relatives, the sick, revival in New England, and the worldwide spread of the good news.

And God regularly answered our prayers, sometimes in astonishing ways. In fact, because prayer became so central and God's answers were so remarkable, we decided that if we ever found a long-term meeting place, a prayer room with 24-hour access would be a priority.

Soon, we outgrew the living room, and because we continued to grow, it seemed we were always having to move. We went from a living room to a rented church hall, to a wedding chapel, to a storage room in the back of a Christian bookstore, to a church building owned by a denomination with plans to restart the church that had closed there.

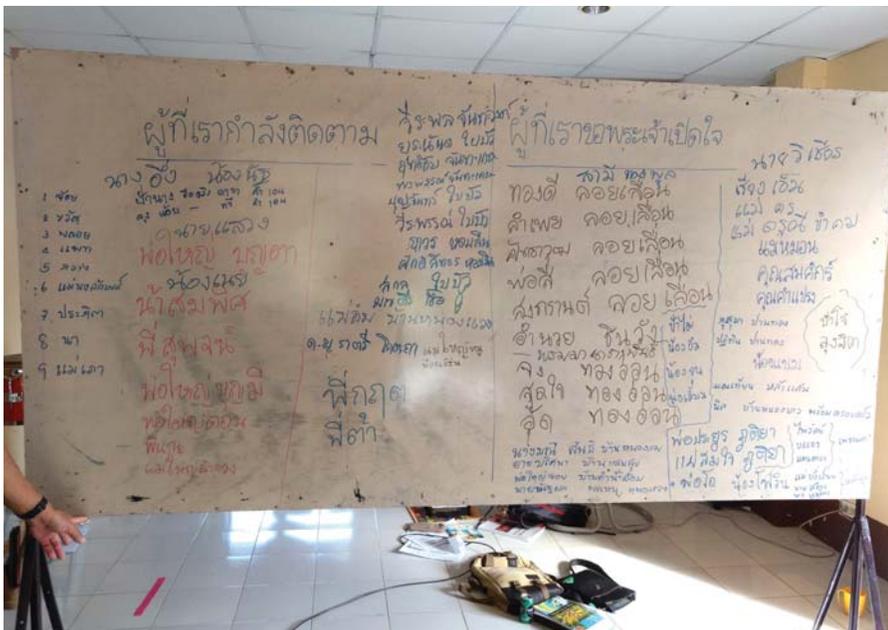
Meanwhile, God gave our fledgling church a surprising opportunity to help another church emerge. We learned about a 60-year-old former pastor, Kenson Ho, whose church in Nanning, China, was forcibly shut down when Mao Tse Tung's revolutionary army invaded the city.

Eventually, Pastor Ho and his family escaped to Hong Kong and later came to Houston, Texas, where he worked in the tax department. Would we help him fulfill his dream of returning to the ministry by helping him plant a Chinese church in Boston?

We agreed, and proceeded to offer help in a variety of ways: We secured an apartment in Chinatown for him and his wife. We found a place for Sunday meetings, and loaned song leaders and Sunday school teachers from our congregation for as long as they were needed.

When Pastor Ho arrived, he and I went through the big Boston phonebook and highlighted all the Chinese names and addresses (there were plenty of Chinese people in the city but only a few surnames).

When we had our list, Pastor Ho sent postcards to everyone, offering English classes, typing classes, and American citizenship classes. Those who responded were the beginning of the Boston Chinese



In Thailand, the Life Enrichment Church lists people to contact and people to pray for as an intentional method of invitation and multiplication, similar to Art McPhee's experience in Boston's Chinatown. Courtesy of Carol Tobin

Church of Saving Grace, which became a thriving congregation with its own building in the heart of Chinatown.

Meanwhile, God had more surprises in store for our new church family, Good Shepherd Christian Fellowship.

A friendship developed between me and two other church planting leaders in Boston. The first was Rich Nichols, the rabbi of a recently formed Messianic Jewish congregation called Ruach Israel. The second was Dr. Larry Martin, the director of the Greater Boston Baptist Association, whose purpose was to oversee Southern Baptist church planting in New England.

As it happened, Rabbi Nichols and Dr. Martin, like me, were looking for long-term locations for their ministries. As we prayed for one another, we discerned God wanted us to work together to find a single facility we could all share.

Both congregations and the Baptist Association affirmed the idea. And so did the Lord! An affordable piece of land that bordered I-95, the beltway around Boston, became available. A hermit with a Ph.D. in chemistry had for forty years lived on the property without electricity or running water. But failing eyesight and the city's condemnation of his hurricane-battered little house was forcing him to sell, and he was enthusiastic about selling to us. "If you can't trust the Mennonites, who can you trust!" he said.

We raised funds for the building together. Much of the construction was done by volunteers from the three groups: Mennonites, Southern Baptists, and Jewish believers working side-by-side, the first instance of its kind in North America! The prayer room was the first room planned. When they heard of it, a foundation started by Days Inns founder Cecil Day offered to pay for it.

The three groups worked hard on building and maintaining close friendship. It has now been more than a quarter of a century since the three groups followed the Lord's lead in this project.

All three still share the facility. All three have been involved in helping birth new churches. More than one new church has gotten started in the worship center itself. Clearly, the building is simply the container for the church that God built.

To me, these two experiences—the birthing of the Chinese church and the cooperative venture of Mennonites, Messianic Jews, and Baptists—remain a reminder that the mission is indeed God's. We could not have thought it up or developed a friendship between the groups on our own.

And, as a corollary, it is a reminder that church planting



The Greendale Avenue Worship Center, a cooperative venture of Mennonites, Messianic Jews, and Baptists, has shared the same building—"a container for the church that God built"—for more than 25 years. Courtesy of Art McPhee

that presumptuously and unimaginatively falls back on old, established patterns or new church planting fads is likely going to miss God's better way!

Art McPhee is a missiologist, author, and former professor. He serves on the board of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Making disciples where we are

So maybe, just maybe, there's no "next big thing" that will actually lead more to join us and sing. It's not about what we can do in our "show." It's much more about if we're willing to go where we are, and there find the people we meet, in our houses, our neighborhoods, out on the street.

Just to live where we are, just as if we've been sent to be witnesses, signs, of God's kingdom that's bent on saving us all, from the most to the least, and inviting us all to sit down at God's feast, to pour out our lives, in real time, here and now, as Christ pours in us, as our hearts may allow.

We can't make disciples like a widget or car; we disciple, as Jesus did, right where we are. Discipling is free but costs all that we have. Will you pour out your life? Will you be healing salve among those who are with you, and those far away as God's kingdom still comes on this earth, here, today?

Excerpts from "Dr. Seuss Waxes Missional: A Pew Forum Report in Rhyme," by Taylor W. Burton-Edwards, Copyright © 2010, The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. Used by permission as accessed on October 9, 2018 at <https://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/dr-suess-waxes-missional-a-pew-forum-report-in-rhyme/>

The search for ultimate identity

BY LYNNE EGGERT

This summer, Lynne Eggert gained perspective on the refugee crisis through spending two weeks in Amman, Jordan, with a VMissions E³ Collective team.

I went to Jordan seeking more clarity regarding the nature of the refugee crisis in that part of the world. To be truthful, I hoped for a personal epiphany about how I could be more meaningfully involved either in Harrisonburg or elsewhere. I brought with me my fairly narrow window of experience as a nurse practitioner in a Free Clinic that serves many refugees resettling into our community. I quickly realized that the parameters of the refugee crisis cannot be forced into a neat flow chart or algorithm since there are so many different but intersecting groups affected.

Our team of seven went to serve alongside Marka Church in the urban sprawl of Amman, a city of four million persons. Marka Church was planted by Jordanian Christians to support and serve the influx into their city of Iraqi and Syrian refugees which some sources claim to be as high as a million persons. To address the barriers Iraqi refugees encounter for work as well as education for their children, Marka Church has a variety of cottage industries and skill training workshops and has opened a small school for refugee children. Another large part of their ministry is discipling folks through home visits, group Bible study, and corporate worship.

We had the privilege of accompanying various Jordanian Christian workers as they visited both Christian and Muslim Iraqi refugees in their homes. I was humbled by the way so many we visited were buoyed by seeing evidence that we, as representatives of the Western church, know they exist and are wanting to show support as brothers and sisters in Christ. We were present to hear their stories, to grieve with them and to offer words of hope and comfort from scripture. We prayed with and for them.

One of the more profound things I experienced was hearing a number of Iraqi Christians relate how they felt their faith was truly growing only now, in the midst of the social and economic purgatory in which they found themselves. These are Christians who had already resisted pressure to deny Christ, stood firm in the face of persecution, and fled their homes and jobs! What is the heart of the challenge for these folks?

Prior to this trip, both in my private devotional time as well as in our preparatory team meetings, I felt God challenging me to reflect on the notion of identity. With what do we cloak ourselves to form our identities? Are our roles as parents, siblings, our professions, our ethnic or ethno-religious heritage what define us? For the people with whom I sat, many if not all of these identifiers had been stripped



Team member Taryn walks with two Jordanian church members to visit Iraqi refugees in their homes.

Photo: Martin Rhodes

away; their identities, to much of the world, have become distilled down into a single, stark word: refugee.

In Jordan, we met displaced men and women suffering with the loss of many of their worldly identifiers, yet as they have become connected with Marka Church, they have been folded into a cycle of discipleship and support that are helping them strengthen their ultimate identity in Christ. I was convicted as I watched so many Jordanian Christians, despite being directly and profoundly affected by the influx of refugees, boldly and seemingly tirelessly walking beside their Iraqi and Syrian brothers and sisters. I was moved by this witness of sacrificial kingdom-building work of the Jordanian Christians day after day.

And almost like a lightning bolt, I was struck with the enormity of what redemptive work God might have afoot in Jordan: Within the very ones the world sees as the least-stripped of possessions, family, identity- a radically pure understanding of who they are in Christ is being nurtured. As I sat in home after home, hearing their stories and testimonies, I kept hearing the beatitudes in my head. I wondered if this sad diaspora is what God will be using to usher in the kingdom to countries and groups that currently possess the world's notion of power. I felt an increased urgency to pray for God's redemptive plan to be effected: that these brothers and sisters of ours may be allowed to relocate to the US, Canada, Germany, Australia so they might proclaim "the kingdom come" in their new homes.

Clearly, only a fairly small percentage of Iraqi refugees are Christian, but I believe all displaced persons share the common experience of needing to figure out what markers of identity will reside with them through the upheaval in their lives. I have felt convicted as a member of the global church that I need to seize opportunities to engage and encourage my displaced brothers and sisters in their search for true identity, and at the same time to continue to challenge my own notions of identity.

Lynne Eggert served on an E³ Collective to Jordan in July 2018.

Cultivate

A vision for GARDEN CITY CHURCH



Six years ago, Tyler Yoder was a Christian college student looking for a church family. Now he is a church planter. What happened?

BY TYLER YODER

I was a college student when I started attending Eastside Church. I came with the “consumer” mentality of “what’s in it for me?” But fairly quickly, I moved from that consumer mentality into being an active participant in something that was being intentionally nurtured within Eastside: an expectation of multiplication, the healthy hallmark of all that God creates. Consistently, I was being immersed in a passion for something I had never really thought about before: church planting.

Growing up in a farming community, the planting metaphor was easy to understand. The Bible likewise is full of such images. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” It was easy for me to imagine what was meant by church planting: plant the seed of the gospel in a community and care for it, trusting God to give growth. I learned that the emphasis on church planting was present because Eastside itself was a relatively new church plant, with the goal of being “a church that plants churches.” We were continually reminded about the importance of sharing the good news with friends and families, and starting new churches where people can come to join in worship to God or be exposed to Christ for the first time.

Along with other Eastside volunteers, Kendra and I started helping with the Ridgeway Mennonite Church Kids Club. Soon we signed on for a summer internship to help run that Kids Club, and we launched a new one together with two other churches, Immanuel and Early Church. Helping at these Kids Clubs gave us an opportunity to see gospel impact in the lives of both children and parents.

Eastside provided many opportunities to remind us that we are missionaries in our own neighborhoods. We are encouraged to be thinking of our neighbors and friends who do not know Christ, because we cannot share the gospel with them if we are not thinking about them! As Michael Frost says in his recent book, *Keep Christianity Weird*, Eastside equips their members “to surprise the world with



Participants at the 2018 worker retreat in July pray for Kendra Yoder, planting Garden City Church with her husband Tyler. Photo courtesy of Carol Tobin

the good news it didn’t even know it was waiting for. [To] challenge the way things are by living a life that has been truly set free by Christ.” Jesus has given us the great commission, and we take that mission with us wherever we are, being ambassadors of Christ’s reconciliation. Inevitably, this should lead to church multiplication as more and more people come to faith in Christ!

Several months ago, six years after starting to attend Eastside, Kendra and I moved to Richmond, Virginia, to plant Garden City Church. We are seeking the wholeness of our neighborhood by focusing on 1. reconciliation with God and others, 2. maturity in faith, and 3. multiplication of Jesus apprentices, and - Lord willing - churches! We want our community to experience in tangible ways the blessing that is available on earth through Christ. We see ourselves walking with God in the city of Richmond, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. And we do not see ourselves walking alone! As we become part of the neighborhood, we want to see God’s good multiply as our neighbors meet Jesus and are empowered to work together for the wholeness of our community. Kendra and I are staking our lives on the power of the gospel to create transformed community where there was no such community, for revival to come to our city!

Tyler Yoder serves as a church planter with his wife Kendra through VMissions at Garden City Church, Richmond, Va.



Call to Prayer: A Culture of Prayer

BY SARAH SHOWALTER

Think about the rhythms of your life—your own personal rhythms, family rhythms, church rhythms. How is prayer part of the rhythm of your life?

As this issue of *Transforming* has taken a closer look at how we create a culture of mission and church multiplication, I've been thinking about the culture of prayer.

One of the amazing things about culture, is that even while culture shapes us, we have the ability to shape culture. What would it look like to be intentional about creating a “culture of prayer” in our homes, in our churches, and really in any setting?

I'm convinced that we can teach about prayer, write about prayer, encourage prayer, and speak highly of prayer all we want, but creating a culture of prayer “is very little about what we say, and very much about what we do. If we don't live it, it's never going to play out as we want.”

I'm often reminded of something Pastor Joi, one of the leaders of Life Enrichment Church in Thailand, said when he was asked about how the church goes about discipling others. His response was, “We share our lives.”

There's something powerful about living out faith and inviting others to not only see it as a model, but to join in. This is how we can create a culture of prayer as well.

One of the most shaping experiences of prayer in my life came during a simple car ride to dinner.

I was riding along with a couple who were working with Eastern Mennonite Missions in Southeast Asia when they got a call about a concerning situation.

After explaining the situation, the couple began to pray as we drove—

simply but actively expressing to God their concerns, worries, hopes, and desires to see God's will be done.

It challenged me and continues to shape my response today—to not just say I'll be praying for a given person or situation, but to stop in my tracks and do it. If someone is having a hard day, to not say, “I'll be praying for you,” but to take time in that moment to pray aloud over them, speaking God's truth and promises over their life.

Manantial de Vida, a Hispanic congregation featured in a previous issue of *Transforming*, hosts weekly

prayer nights. Their goal and purpose for these prayer nights is both to pursue the Father's will through prayer, but also to teach and motivate the church to grow in prayer.

Pastor Wendy often leads the prayer nights from the microphone, applying the truth of God to the prayers of the congregation.

By inviting others into the rhythms of prayer in our lives, we're not only inviting them to pray, we're inviting them to more fully discover the nature of God and kingdom of God.

Jesus, upon asking for the stone to be rolled away from Lazarus' grave prayed aloud, “Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.”

There was something important that Jesus wanted to model, something about the connection between prayer and miracles and about a God who always hears us.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6, he wasn't just giving them another spiritual discipline to check off the list. Jesus' model of prayer revealed things about the nature of God and the kingdom of God.



Jesus modeled a connection between prayer and miracles when he raised Lazarus from the dead.

The Raising of Lazarus, etching by Rembrandt, circa 1632. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” There is a holiness and honor to be given to God.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God's desire for earth is the same wholeness experienced in heaven.

“Give us today our daily bread.” God is our provider.

“Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.” God desires for us to live free from the bondage of sin. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” God has the power to strengthen us when we are tempted. Jesus' prayer witnesses to who God is and what God is doing among us.

And so, the challenge is this: to yield to the Spirit as we infuse the rhythms of our life with prayer and to invite others into our rhythms of prayer. In doing so, may we live into a culture of prayer that witnesses to the nature of Christ and the kingdom of God.



Sarah Showalter is a freelance writer and former VMMissions staff member.



Melody Zimmerman serves with Kids Club in the Shenandoah Valley. Photo: Bridgett Brunea

Worker profile: **Melody Zimmerman**

Service program: tranSend

Assignment:

My .4FTE assignment for the year is to work with Kids Club in the Shenandoah Valley. I can't think of anything I would rather do! I get to empower churches to share the gospel with the children of their neighborhoods! As a part of many teams on mission, I serve those teams wherever needed, strengthening the network and encouraging cross pollination between these groups. I provide administrative support, curriculum support, and hands on support with the weeknight Kids Clubs at multiple churches. Best of all, I have the privilege of building relationships with the 70-100 kids who are attending different Kids Clubs in Harrisonburg.

Biggest challenge:

Each church that I work with has unique challenges and joys. I feel the

challenge of being pulled in many directions while trying to maintain the right levels of connection with so many kids and adults. I also feel the emotional weight of caring for many lovely, intense, and vulnerable kids.

Biggest joy:

My biggest joy is helping children see themselves as God sees them as dearly loved children of God. I also have great joy in equipping the church to do what the church is meant to do: bear witness to God's love and transformation in concrete ways to the people around them.

A typical day:

I wake up early to teach English online. Then I put my neighbor kid on the bus and enjoy some quiet time in my home. After lunch I head over to the Intensive English Program at EMU where I teach a class to beginning level English learners (most of whom are immigrants). When I come home I settle down to some Kids Club ad-

ministrative work - emailing, curriculum prep, and logistics. Once a week I meet with long-term Kids Club workers, Seth and Theresa Crissman. Three evenings a week are devoted to being a part of Kids Clubs. I briefly meet with the team of volunteers before we go out on "walking bus." Walking bus entails knocking on doors, chatting with parents, waiting while kids put their shoes on, holding hands while crossing roads, and catching up on life. Depending on the church, sometimes I lead the story, songs, or activities; other times I am just a smiling adult ready to jump in wherever. It is exciting to see activities that I dreamed up with Theresa and others play out. At the end, we walk the kids home. I love these times of walking and connecting with the kids. Back from walking bus, the team meets briefly to reflect and pray before we part ways. I come home to my sweet husband, Matthew. We eat dinner, often go for a walk, have devotions and go to bed.



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FALL 2018 MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIP EVENT



N.T. WRIGHT

A SERIES OF PRESENTATIONS ON
"Discerning the Dawn"

NOVEMBER 13-14, 2018 • HARRISONBURG, VA

Tuesday, November 13

7:30-9:00 a.m. • Area Pastors' Breakfast at
Park View Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall

*Twelve Steps to Transformative Christian Citizenship:
Some Biblical Challenges* (plus Q&A)

11:00-11:45 a.m.

Eastern Mennonite Seminary Chapel at Martin Chapel
The Spirit and the Church's Task (based on John 16:4b-15)

7:00-8:30 p.m. • Keynote at JMU's Memorial Hall

*Signposts from a Suffering World: How God Reveals Himself
Despite Everything*

Wednesday, November 14

10:10-11:00 a.m. • Eastern Mennonite University Chapel at Lehman Auditorium
The Day the Revolution Began: Atonement the Right Way Round

11:00-11:30 a.m. • Post chapel Q&A with N.T. Wright at Lehman Auditorium

7:00-8:30 p.m. • Augsburg Lecture Series Colloquium Address at Lehman Auditorium
Promised Glory: Thinking Straight about God and the World (plus Q&A)

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