

Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Summer 2019
VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 2



Family matters in God's mission



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 **VMMissions**
1919 Celebrating 100 Years 2019

Discipleship begins at home



BY AARON KAUFFMAN
PRESIDENT

Where do families fit in Christian discipleship? The Bible sees both potential and danger. On one hand, family is the ideal setting for nurturing faith, where parents can model and teach God's ways to their children (Dt. 6:6-7; Eph. 6:4). On the other hand, family can become a competitor to the ultimate allegiance we owe to God. As Jesus

put it starkly, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

One pastor I know defines discipleship as building a life centered on Christ. In his book, *Grow at Home*, Winfield Bevins offers a clear vision for how that can happen in families: "Family discipleship is when parents help their children become disciples of Jesus Christ in the home through reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, and doing missions together."

In our home, we have found it fruitful to follow the pattern that Bevins describes. First, we prioritize weekly worship with the gathered church, the family of God. When we consistently participate in the life of the church, we learn to say, "This is my first family. These are my brothers and sisters in Christ." Or as one of my seminary professors taught, the waters of baptism run thicker than the blood of family.

Second, we practice regular rhythms of Bible reading and prayer. With our younger children, we read a children's Bible before bedtime. With the older ones, we read together at the breakfast table before heading off to school and work. We pray and often sing at meals, and we close the day with prayer. Even our five-year-old takes a turn at praying, which I am sure is especially pleasing to our Lord, who said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

A third way we follow Jesus as a family is through joining in mission together. Praying for our friends and neighbors, as well as mission workers on the VM Missions prayer calendar, is one way we participate in mission. Another way is through service. This past spring, our girls held a bake sale to raise money for children's ministries, entirely on their own initiative. And last summer we had the privilege of taking a short-term mission trip to Colombia, where my wife and I had served as missionaries over a decade ago.

Finally, we've learned that family discipleship requires an atmosphere of grace. Bevins honestly describes his own failings as a parent, with which I can identify. Perhaps you can too. He writes, "There have been times when I have lost my temper or said something to my family that was not out of love and I have had to repent and ask for God's forgiveness and for my family's forgiveness as well. In moments like these, we need to be reminded that God's grace is sufficient for our lives and our homes. Grace is good news for imperfect parents!"

Cover photo: Riding along with pastor Rodrigo Preciado in La Mesa, Colombia. VM Missions President Aaron Kauffman and his family visited La Mesa in 2018, where they had served a decade earlier.

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Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/18 to 05/31/19

Special Projects \$993,290	Special Projects \$1,003,606
Mission Fund \$556,273	Mission Fund \$661,486
Revenue Total \$1,549,563	Expenses Total \$1,665,092

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

Transforming

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Celebrating two spring events: first Putt Fore Missions and seventh Motorcycle for Missions

On the beautiful evening of May 23, mini-golfers of all ages competed in Bridgewater, Virginia, at Sandy Bottom Park. The course was full with 31 teams putting to win the Champion Green Jacket t-shirt. Many others gathered under the tent for the delicious barbecue. The event was made possible by the generous donations of local sponsors.

Steve Burkholder was the overall winner, with the lowest score of 39, including 3 holes-in-one. Overall there were 46 holes-in-one. In addition to registration fees, participants were encouraged to raise money through sponsorships, car washes or bake sales. In all, \$7,280 was raised in support of sharing new life in Jesus with neighbors near and far.

Next year's Putt Fore Missions will be held on May 28, the last Thursday before Memorial Day.



Photo by John Sichenze

On June 14-15, 25 riders hit the road through 331 miles of Virginia's countryside for the seventh annual **Motorcycle for Missions**, raising \$12,103 for the ministries of VMissions. The motorcyclists rode the Blue Ridge Parkway, stopping at Edith's Route 60 Diner for lunch. Rider Steve Leaman noted that a special mission moment occurred at lunch, when riders joined in praying for a young man and his family during his deployment party to the US Air Force.

Next year's ride will be held in mid-June.

VMissions to celebrate centennial at Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly on July 18

VMissions is celebrating one hundred years of equipping the church to share the good news with neighbors near and far. Celebrations will commence at Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly on Thursday, July 18, including a worker commissioning, stories of transformation, and displays highlighting a century of faithfulness and transformation.

Starting at 7:00 p.m. at Lindale Mennonite Church, 6255 Jesse Bennett Way, Linville, Va., a number of former and current workers will share testimonies about how they have responded to God's call, and how God has brought transformation through their service.

- Willard Eberly** (former worker, Italy)
- Richard and Margaret Keeler** (former workers, Trinidad)
- Alfonso Alvarado** (USA)
- Jason Wagner** (USA)
- Dini and Klementina Shahini** (Albania)
- Jacob and Hosanna** (South Asia)
- Aaron Kauffman**, VMissions President

See the back page for more information.

Bike Shenandoah Fall Ride is September 14

Bike Shenandoah's Fall Ride will be held September 14, beginning and ending at Eastern Mennonite School, 801 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, Va.

- 7:30 am – 62 mile
- 9:00 am – 30 mile
- 10:00 am – 15 mile
- 11:00 am – 5 mile family ride

This is a family-friendly and healthy way to support six local agencies: Mennonite Central Committee, Virginia Mennonite Missions, MennoMedia, Our Community Place, Roberta Webb Child Care Center, and NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center. Learn more at bikeshenandoah.org

Introducing VMissions president, Dr. Aaron M. Kauffman



Dr. Kauffman with Dr. Art McPhee

Aaron M. Kauffman graduated in May from Asbury Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry degree. His dissertation entitled, "Thriving: Effective Strategies for the Evangelism and Discipleship of Emerging Adults," uncovers five key strategies used by local churches to successfully engage this population.

To identify these practices, he surveyed the pastors of Virginia Mennonite Conference to gain an overview of their perspectives on young adult ministry. He then interviewed the pastors of six Harrisonburg churches growing in overall size and percentage of young adults and conducted focus groups with young adults from those churches. Participants from these churches represented a range of denominations and ethnic backgrounds.

Major findings of the study include: the need for churches to articulate a robust gospel of personal and social transformation; to combine relational evangelism with warm hospitality; to prioritize discipling relationships, biblical engagement, corporate worship, and prayer in young adult spiritual growth; and to appreciate the unique cultural pressures and turbulence of life stage which characterize emerging adulthood.

As chair of the VMissions board, Lavonne Lehman commented appreciatively, "Both this study and the strategic priority to 'cultivate the next generation of missional leaders' are examples of Aaron's effective and forward thinking leadership of VMissions. We are very grateful."

● Immanuel, God with us!

Raleigh offers tender reflections on the gift of God's presence to their family as they offer a ministry of presence among their Muslim neighbors.



BY RALEIGH (Sensitive location; names changed)

Imagine if you were a child and each of your days was filled with questions like: What is going on around me? What are my friends saying right now? What is the teacher saying? What am I supposed to do now? Did I do something wrong? What if I don't understand? Why is everyone angry? What is everyone laughing about? Or, even worse, why is everyone laughing—or angry—at me?

Since coming to this North African country nearly four years ago, the name Immanuel (God with us) has been a constant comfort and strength to our family.

Immanuel: God is with us, giving us courage when we're afraid.

Life for our children who are trying to answer many of these questions can be scary, not to mention exhausting. It is, honestly, frightening for us parents some days as well (when I need to go talk with the police; or when someone is inviting us to something and we are struggling to understand what, etc). But we are comforted when we remember that we are friends with a God who is with us in all of this!

Each night as we put our four children to bed, we whisper to them, "Immanuel, God is with you!" I began saying

this soon after we arrived here so that my daughter would not be afraid to be alone in the dark, but it quickly took on other meanings. The act of reminding ourselves and our children that this is who God is (with us!) in his essence—this is a powerful reality!

Our eldest daughter, Anna, has learned on her own that our bedtime liturgy is powerful; she responds by giving the blessings back to us.

Baba (Arabic for "Daddy"): "Anna, you are my daughter whom I love. With you I am well pleased."

Anna: "Baba, you are my baba whom I love. With you I am well pleased."

Baba: "Immanuel, God is with you."

Anna: "God is with you; Immanuel, God is with us."

"Sleep well; sleep well."

Immanuel: God is with us, softening hearts to receive the good news.

Robbie, our oldest, is a wonderful treasure. His many gifts include a sensitive heart for worship in music, autism, and an extra chromosome in every cell of his body. Immanuel is very near our boy, using him powerfully to soften hearts for the kingdom.

In fact, here in our new town, the first time we got to read the Bible with someone in the local language, Robbie led the way. He had crawled right into the young man's lap—and heart—prompting the young man to accompany us home for the afternoon. He carried Robbie to our front gate, but neither was ready to be separated, so into our house they came together. When the young man asked what our nativity scene was about, I pulled out the good book with the answers, and he read the story of Jesus' birth for the first time in his own language, explaining to me what was going on. He wants to come back and finish the story sometime.

Immanuel: God is with us, giving us hope for our friends.

When I was a child, my dad would often remind me and my siblings to take time to care for kids who didn't have it as good as us. I think this is why I befriended many people at school who were on the fringes.

Recently I had a conversation with Anna where she was beginning to realize what it meant that her friends didn't believe in, or even really know about, Jesus. She began to be very sad at the implications of this, so I told her she would have many chances to share the good news with her friends



Raleigh and his daughters Anna and Beth help to pick out little bits of stubble from the wheat of their neighbor.

Photo by Opal



Opal and daughters Gem (left), Anna, and Beth on a family outing to enjoy a view of the mountains near their home. (It is not as dangerous as it appears!) Photo by Raleigh

over the years. We pray for this often.

She also told me one day that her teachers were yelling at the other students and hitting them. When I asked Anna why the teachers hit or scream at the children, her answer was quite profound. With a deeply thoughtful, faraway look, she said slowly, "Maybe... it's because the teachers came from a country where they were hit and yelled at by their teachers." Surprised by her answer (deeper than my intended question), it took me a moment before I responded, "Yes, Anna, I think you're right."

When we are overwhelmed by the need—for all of our teachers, friends, classmates, neighbors, colleagues, and basketball teammates to know Jesus—we are thankful for our good Immanuel, who can soften their hearts and make the way for them to believe.

Please join with our family in praying for the millions of people in this country and around the world who desperately need to know the love of "God with us!"

Raleigh serves with his wife Opal and four children in North Africa. They serve with Rosedale Mennonite Missions, in partnership with VM Missions.

Dirty Tears

By Opal (Spring 2018 and 2019)

*We went out weeping dirty tears until the rains would come again.
This foreign land, this droughted desert - wait -
and thunder runs far, far away in a cloudless sky
above the olive groves, the waiting flocks of sheep and seeds still in the sand.
Our cheeks are mud. Our pillows starch from all the sun.
The years will never cease to rumble, children never cease to grow.*

*But soften.
Years soften like the meadows after rain returns, and waiting,
waiting on the children, bigger, running to the field
because it floods with golden green. The rains have come.*

*Our sheets drip, hanging; we are looking over rooftops towards the mosque -
"Peace" we say with other lips. "Look, our neighbors!" says our little girl;
girl grown by this land's light and oil, couscous, citrus, tea, and grace.
Tonight the kisses we receive will be from every woman that we meet,
and "Peace" will be on every brief hello.
The rain will be on every breath; the patted rounds of life, called bread, can grow.*

*We have come home (although we do not call it that, there is another word).
but we are home and every day will choose to be
at home where darkness often veils the way, and light so often brights our stay.*

● Not here to raise a family?

Shawn Green sees godly parenting as an integral part of bearing witness to the gospel in Termoli, Italy.



BY SHAWN GREEN

I am frequently told that raising a family is not the reason we are here as missionaries. While in some respects this is true, Laura and I have chosen to consider our family life as a part of our missional call.

When I think of ministry, two aspects in the scriptures have always stuck out to me in particular: Jesus' approach to people and the meeting of their needs (even if they didn't really know what they needed), and God's response to Moses, "What are you holding in your hand?" We looked at the culture and asked ourselves, "How can we serve these people? What are the needs that we see around us? What do we have that can be an influence and a witness to them?"

What we saw was a culture saturated by religious beliefs, religious rules, religious tradition and religious solutions. If I would compare it to anything, I would say that it is similar to what Jesus found in Israel—many needs and all the wrong answers.

Our job has been to search for any and every inroad to those that surround us, natural ways to relate and to build relationships. This is especially important since our current visa doesn't allow us to hold outside jobs as a way of relating to locals. We asked ourselves, "What gifts, abilities, and talents do we have to offer? What are the fishes and loaves we have in our possession?" What we discovered was that we were able to build relationships in our neighborhood through daily family interactions, and through hospitality.

Our neighborhood has a number of families with children around the age of ours. Together they ride bikes around the street and play in our yard, which is one of the few available in the neighborhood. We have natural connections with many of the parents; we have opportunities to share the gospel—through direct interaction, but also through what they observe in our children's behavior—not that they are always angels!

There was the time that our children took flowers and an apologetic note to a neighbor after they had joined their friends in throwing fallen fruits against their wall. Our neighbors have watched us insist that our children ask their playmates to forgive them after they have spoken hurtful words.

Thus, neighbors notice and ask questions. These are opportunities to demonstrate that as believers we approach life issues in a different fashion. Beyond this, the upbringing of our children—the transforming grace of Christ in their lives—gives compelling evidence to our local friends of God's transforming power. This is something that no amount of talk about the gospel or teaching of biblical truth can convey.

We understand that children are key to the moral fabric of future generations. We want to set an example of providing consistent direction and training for our children, realizing that if left to themselves, as Italian society dictates, these children who play with our children will grow up in a world that is void of most moral guidelines, and most unfortunately, of the truth of the gospel.

Because teachers as well as neighbors notice our parenting, we have had opportunities to speak into their lives. We have also been invited to share other gifts through music programs. Classmates' parents become contacts with whom we are able to build relationships, talk about our beliefs and share the gospel.

Here the concepts of family and the raising of children differ greatly from most North American styles of child-rearing. For example, in Italian culture, the



The Green family works to clean the green area that the church has adopted in Vasto, "showing actions to go with what we preach." Photo courtesy of Shawn Green





The Green family: Laura and Shawn with children (from left) Emmanuel, Lucas, Matteo, and Isabella, have served in Italy since 2014. Their work in the Vasto area involves many neighborhood interactions through hospitality and example.

(below) Isabella Green (held by Laura at right) is dedicated to the Lord by Giovanni Greco, along with the children of other young families in the Vasto church.

Philippians 2:4 attitude of “looking to the interests of others,” applies only in the setting of family. Far more prevalent is the assumption that *if it does not benefit me then it is not worth doing* and furthermore, *if it does benefit me—even if it may harm someone else—then it is acceptable.*

Fellow believers in the church also observe a style of upbringing that is in tune with biblical standards. I still remember the confusion on the faces of our hosts when our oldest attempted to help clear the table, an activity that in most families is only done by the ladies. His behavior demonstrated the kind of readiness to serve that needs to be developed in many believers here, since it is so culturally unfamiliar.

But greater than the enlarged circle of influence that our family life gives us, is the reality of our call as parents (and most specifically, fathers) to raise and be responsible for our children. This is evident in Timothy and in Titus—Scriptures concerning the qualifications of elders and leaders in the church. If we are negligent in our duties as parents, how can we expect to receive a greater responsibility? How can we expect

to be faithful in those tasks? How can we expect our performance in leadership to bring glory to God if we are not following something scripture has instructed us to do at home? Our purpose as believers and disciples of Christ is to bring glory to God in all that we do. We do this by obeying the commandments and instructions that we find within God’s word.



This is sufficient for me to say that part of our mission, our purpose, our mandate as believers, is the raising of our children and the faithful nurturing of faith within our families. Family and mission cannot be separated.

Shawn Green serves with his wife Laura and their four children in Termoli, Italy, and neighboring communities.

Shawn Green serves with his wife Laura and their four children in Termoli, Italy, and neighboring communities.



Laura Green (left) has developed a friendship with neighbors Michele and Maria, sharing the love of Jesus with them.

Photo courtesy of Shawn Green

Family treasure hunting

BY MARTIN RHODES

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and in his joy he went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Matthew 13:43-44

As a child, I loved treasure hunts. Our parents would take us into the mountains to a cabin that we frequented in the spring and summer. A highlight of those trips was when our parents would hide small treasures and turn us loose in the wild to find them. We would scour the pump house, search under bridges, turn over rocks and eventually find the hidden treasure with shouts of joy and “Look what I found!”

Almost as fun as finding my treasure was continuing to search in order to hide the knowledge of the treasure from my siblings and to share in their joy when they found it. These treasure hunting days with my parents and siblings still stand out clearly to me after all these years.

I have continued this tradition with my three children and they now share in the delight and thrill of the hunt and discovery. In doing so, I am hoping that my children get a glimpse of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like as revealed by the scriptures and the church.

Discovery, amazement, wonder and joy are all unmistakable markers of those who have discovered the Kingdom of God made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. More important to me than all the trinkets in the world are the stories that my parents shared with me of the good news of the gospel and the way that Christ was present in our home, bursting at its seams with creativity and seven children! Their illuminating witness prompted me to discover the treasure of Jesus for myself.

When I think of what it means to be a family on mission, I am inevitably drawn to the thrill of discovery. “But

seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). To seek means to engage the world that God made, to open-handedly receive the gifts that God pours out on us and the world he loves.

Our family tries to embody this attitude of daily seeking as we participate in our local church and in our home community roles as students, teacher and discipleship coach.

But also, we find ways to engage cross-culturally, and to thereby discover the richness of the world that God created and loves. Several years ago, my wife Sylvia and I and our three children (aged 9, 8 and 6) were part of a VMissions team to Trinidad to partner with the local Mennonite church in neighborhood outreach and vacation Bible school. My children quickly became fast friends with the grandson who was staying with our host mother for the summer. Kern led our children through a voyage of discovery of native animals, plants, foods and geography where frequent exclamations of “look” or “wow” rang out through the hot air.

As we prepared to leave at the end of eight days, Sylvia mentioned another wonderful discovery to our wise host-ess. “A week earlier we were strangers; now we are friends.”



Kern (left) with new friends Elliot, Annaliese, and Vincent Rhodes in Trinidad in 2016.

Photo courtesy of Martin Rhodes

This wise woman quickly corrected her. “We were never strangers, only sisters and brothers in Christ.” Yes, thank you Sister Chandra and Kern for graciously sharing your home and life with us across the boundaries of language and culture. As a son whose parents helped me to discover the boundless love of God, I cannot as a father help but continue to seek, find, and invite my children—and many others—to join me in the wild hunt.

Martin Rhodes is Discipleship Ministries Coach at VMissions.

Family on mission: God’s business over busyness

BY CAROL TOBIN

Family is such a loaded concept—the mere mention of which can stir our deepest pains and our deepest passions. It can be the fountain of life or the heavy chain of dysfunction from which we long to escape. It means different things in different cultures. In our culture, it tends to be nuclear, insular and isolated. But, families can be creatively expansive in their embrace—bringing energy and nourishment to the broader community. We read in Psalm 62 that God places the lonely in families. We are hard wired to long for the intimate family place of knowing and being known.

According to the North American secularized mindset, the various arenas of life are meant to function independently of one another. Thus, we become adept at juggling work, school, family, and church. If we juggle well, we might even have a little extra time to look about and ask, like Mr. Rogers, “Who are the people in my neighborhood?” But all this juggling is tiring especially if we are attempting to juggle both family and mission.

But what if, as followers of Jesus, we took a hard look at the kind of life that began to percolate back there in Jerusalem, after Pentecost? The believers first met in homes, which were themselves beehives of vocational activity—complexly interconnected households, rather than the nuclear family enclave from the world that we tend to envision. These extended families found themselves extending family to others. It is this *oikos*—Greek for household—structure which housed the phenomenal growth of the church in the centuries up until Constantine.

We have a steep learning curve ahead of us in trying to reclaim what has been lost through our acquiescence to secular culture. Some of us have the hard work of giving back to God what has become an idol. Others will face the hard work of reclaiming the hope of being part of a healthy family, biological or otherwise. My husband Skip and I believe that God will pour his life through us in dynamic ways as we take steps to integrate our family lives into the family life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—directing our energies into the business enterprise of that family—the very mission of God!

One place where we see deep desire for this kind of integration family life with God’s mission is in a “family on mission” huddle that we host in our home every other Tuesday morning. Huddles are accountable learning communities in which we focus on giving an account for what we



Skip Tobin (third from left) leads a huddle for couples that helps integrate the often separate spheres of family and mission. Photo courtesy of Jacob

are hearing from God and how we are taking steps forward in obedience. This particular huddle includes husbands and wives representing five different families. Toddlers trip over toys on the floor, and an older child or two bend over home school books nearby. There, with our tea and toast, we experience a safe place to process, encourage and pray together.

There have been some beautiful outworkings from the deep stirrings within these five families, each a signpost of hope that the integration of family and mission is possible. One family offers a weekday morning *Lectio Divina* time at their house, followed by a simple breakfast. Another family makes it a priority to build relationships with both parents and children in their ethnically diverse neighborhood, often offering special events and regularly visiting home to home. Another family hosts family-friendly tours to their farm and facilitates a monthly mom’s support group for other young mothers eager for connection.

For each of these families, it is not a matter of doing more within the frustrating constraints of time and energy. It is a matter of recognizing that God is brilliant enough to bring the pieces of our lives together for his purposes. Then we have the joy of watching him work with what we offer!

Carol Tobin is Asia Regional Director and Mission Advocate for VMissions.

Call to Prayer: No junior Holy Spirit for children!

BY PRISCILLA GNANAMANICKAM

Children don't have a junior Holy Spirit." This is what we were told by a missionary couple when we were young parents in India, as we were learning to listen to the voice of the Lord and follow him.

"Encourage your children to listen to the voice of the Lord speaking, like Samuel did." They told us furthermore that children are like the canaries that miners used to take into the mines with them to warn them of toxic gases. They are more sensitive and easily affected by spiritual conditions, even though they may not be able to communicate or explain what they are picking up. These mentors admonished us to pay very close attention to children and their behavior.

So the practical way we go about it as a family is during our time together, talking and praying with our children about the needs of our family and of those around us. For example, we say, "Nanny is not feeling well. Listen to what Jesus wants for her."

We encourage them to listen for a word, a picture Jesus might want

to give them. Once they've heard or seen, then we ask them to pray or speak accordingly.

Sometimes we come back from a place and one of the children might say, "It felt strange there," or "So and so didn't seem happy." We then ask them to describe what they are sensing, or "smelling" and then ask them to listen to what Jesus is speaking and doing. Sometimes they have heard to bind the evil one and other times to pray what Jesus is praying over that person.

Most of this happens around our dinner table or while we're driving together. One time we were getting ready to go on a road trip. My husband asked the kids to listen to the Lord as to which route to go. One of our children described what they were seeing. We knew it wasn't the route we would have picked but chose to follow the Lord's leading.

About 45 minutes into the drive, our van began overheating. We had to stop quickly. There were auto stores close by on this particular route and a safe place for the family to wait while my husband fixed the problem. When we got back in the van, we all could testify of the Lord's goodness and provision.



Jessica, Joshua, and Jonathan Gnanamanickam at the beach.

Photo courtesy of Priscilla Gnanamanickam

As our kids have gotten older, they say sometimes, "Can we go and do something (instead of praying)?" We live in a culture that trains us to do and keep doing! But we try to remind the children that Jesus constantly went away to pray, to be with the Father and listen.

We also teach our children that we know in part and prophesy in part (1 Corinthians 13:9). When we don't receive the answers we hope for, we encourage them to trust the One who is in complete control, as we "walk by faith and not by sight."

One of the keys to listening is keeping our hearts clean. If one of them says, "I can't hear anything today," then we ask them if they are upset with someone. Anger, bitterness and unforgiveness hinders our communion with the Lord and hence our hearing ability.

This process of hearing the voice of the Lord together as a family unites us and helps us begin to be "the gathering" — the Ecclesia — in our home.

Priscilla Gnanamanickam is the wife of VMMissions Board member Johnnie Gnanamanickam. She and her family reside in Chesapeake, Va.



Jessica Gnanamanickam prays with her younger sister Elisa Joy. Photo courtesy of Priscilla Gnanamanickam



● Worker profile: **Peg and Lee Martin**

Service program: transForm

Assignment:

We are serving in McDowell County, West Virginia, as Location Coordinators with SWAP (Sharing With Appalachian People), a 35-year-old program of Mennonite Central Committee. SWAP's goal is to bring volunteers to Appalachia to better understand the context, engage in mutually beneficial relationships with local folks, and make homes safe, warm and dry, all in the name of Christ. We work for homeowners who are unable to make needed home repairs. We provide food service and lodging for volunteers, plan and lead their work, provide building materials, facilitate encounters with the local community, and relate to local churches and non-profit organizations.

Biggest challenge:

Our greatest challenge is discerning which jobs to take on, as the applications we receive far outnumber the work we can accomplish. It is hard to see people, including children and

the elderly, living in houses that are literally falling in and down around them, desperate for any help available, knowing we can't say "yes" to many of the requests.

Biggest joy:

Our greatest joy is seeing God bring together people who share their gifts, faith and life experiences with each other, while much needed work is accomplished for people living in sub-standard housing. For example, just this week we encountered a homeowner that a number of volunteer groups worked for last summer. She beamed as she spoke of the love she experienced and how God answered her prayers, strengthened her faith, and transformed her into a more talkative person as she realized workers really wanted to hear her story and get to know her.

A typical day:

During our SWAP season in the summer, the day usually begins around 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. for the cooks. As breakfast is being prepared, lunch supplies are arranged for the volunteers to pack bag lunches beginning

at 6:30. Breakfast is served at 7:00 and volunteers have their group devotions and are ready to gather for last minute instructions and a word of inspiration by 8:00. The Job Site Coordinators lead volunteers to their worksite where they work until lunchtime. If homeowners or neighbors want to talk, we encourage volunteers to make visiting a priority. Work for the day is wrapped up around 4 p.m. when the groups return to the SWAP site in time to be ready for dinner at 6 p.m.

Throughout the day, Lee travels from one worksite to another to give guidance, answer questions, and make note of needed supplies. Peg is back at the SWAP location working with the cooks, communicating with upcoming groups, planning menus, generally keeping things going, being available to run errands, and with any luck, making a surprise run to the worksites with snacks and cold drinks.

After dinner we offer a short devotional time followed by a local speaker or musician, or a presentation to promote discussion and learning about the area and culture.



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

Designed by Freepik



CENTENNIAL *Celebration*

JULY 18, 2019

GATHER 6:45, SERVICE 7:00 | LINDALE MENNONITE CHURCH

Mission Stories Past & Present

Willard Eberly, former worker, Italy
Richard and Margaret Keeler, former workers, Trinidad
Alfonso Alvarado, USA
Jason Wagner, USA
Dini and Klementina Shahini, Albania
Jacob and Hosanna, South Asia
Aaron Kauffman, VMMissions President

Commissioning Service

Celebrating and sending new mission workers and leaders

Music

VMMissions workers Seth Crissman
and **Rachel Yoder** will lead music

Kids' Activities

Program and special activities for kids
by Kids Club staff and volunteers

Childcare available

Cake & Ice Cream