

Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Summer 2020
VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 2



Third Culture Kids: uniquely formed and called to serve



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● Two TCKs share their stories PAGE 6

 **VMMissions**

● Editorial

The children who ask, “Who am I?”



BY CAROL TOBIN, CONTENT EDITOR AND
MISSION ADVOCATE

In case you never noticed, there are a lot of acronyms in the mission world. MK [missionary kid] or the less specific TCK [third culture kid] are ones that need to be known. These terms refer to individuals who have lived in a culture other than that of their parents during a significant part of their childhood.

It was during one of our furloughs from service in Thailand that someone put a little spiral-bound book into our hands, *You Know You're an MK When...* which lists 500 different situations, responses, and feelings that left our daughters either howling with delight or on the verge of tears. It assured them that they were understood! There was a name for the complexity they felt around the question, “Who are you?”

- Your parents’ siblings are strangers to you but you have 50-60 aunts and uncles who are no blood relation to you at all.
- You can’t answer the question, “Where are you from?”
- You can quote your parents’ sermons from furlough word for word.
- You describe Americans as if you were not one yourself.
- Your parents have discipled hundreds of other people, but your own faith is shrouded in doubt.
- All your life, you have been defined by your parents’ profession, and now you want an identity of your own.

Having grown up in Thailand, our daughters are TCKs. Their faith has been tested by deep affinity with people whose view of the world is vastly different than theirs. Yet, they are convinced of the reality and relevance of Jesus - here, there, and everywhere. They are well positioned for witness in the intercultural settings that abound in our world today.

Hosanna realized God’s heart for Muslims in South Asia as her best friend in boarding school met Jesus. It broke her heart when after graduation her friend’s Muslim family pressured her to recant. Bethany bristled in frustration as she sat in seminary classes where her professor not only spoke disparagingly of mission but refused to grant validity to what she knew to be true in her own experience.

A recent conversation with my nine-year-old granddaughter reveals to me that her faith and identity are already being deeply shaped as she, like her mother, grows up in Thailand. During devotions this week, Anjali soberly made the stunning statement, “I want to be a Christian. I realize that this is true.” Why this declaration on this particular morning? Because she was reflecting on the news that a member of their house church in Thailand had renounced her faith. But Anjali knew the story of how this “auntie” had come to believe. She had had a dream about Jesus and discovered in the morning that the amulet she always wore around her neck was around her neck no longer! God had come to her in her dream and literally set her free! Anjali declared, “The story about the necklace is still true, even if she turned away. The story isn’t gone. It doesn’t just go fake. God is there.”

Be encouraged by the glimpses into the lives of TCKs in this issue, and join me in applauding them for enduring the arduous journey of discovering who they are as deeply rooted children of God.

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Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/19 to 05/31/20

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Special Projects \$1,221,799 | Special Projects \$1,089,822 |
| Mission Fund 633,056 | Mission Fund \$677,060 |
| Revenue Total \$1,854,856 | Expenses Total \$1,766,882 |

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

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Cover photo: Itzel Sanchez serves on a 2018 E³ Collective in Greece. See article on page 8. Courtesy photo

A new dynamic design for VMissions worker training

This July, with offices closed and quiet due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is necessary for training of new VMissions workers to look very different than it has in previous years. However, staff are eager to implement a new dynamic design that it is hoped will serve well for years to come.

Martin Rhodes, Discipleship Ministries Coach, explains the new vision that has emerged within the Equipping Team which he directs. "We will be offering a 40-week training course that spans the length of a year's assignment. Each week, the cohort of new workers will meet virtually to engage content from guest facilitators with the goal of putting into practice what we are learning as we are engaged in our assignments. These regular connections will allow us to build a culture of accountability among each other as a cohort and to hear the concerns and prayers that emerge in the midst of ministry."

As long as state guidance regarding the pandemic allows, the US-based participants will also be able to benefit by in-person gatherings. Says Rhodes, "We will host quarterly gatherings focused on fellowship and eating together including two day-long retreats where we can dig deeper into some areas of content that are better learned through a longer time together in a more intensive and intimate setting." Rhodes adds, "Our hope is that both our workers and the church as a whole can be strengthened in the work of sharing the gospel and engaging in the work of the kingdom."

Rhodes invites prayer as the new program is launched. "Please be in prayer for us as we launch this new 'Training for Transformation' program. We are excited to carry on what has made our training excellent these past years while leaning into the new that the Spirit has for us to learn as we journey together."

My Coins Count will respond to some of the most vulnerable in the COVID-19 crisis



VMissions and Menno-nite Central Committee (MCC) are cooperating to channel this year's My Coins Count funds to benefit some of the most vulnerable people during the global COVID-19 crisis.

Gifts through My Coins Count will help VMissions continue to respond to needs arising in the communities where our workers and partners live and serve. VMissions organized a Coronavirus Immigrant Care Fund to address pressing needs in the Harrisonburg community and beyond. The generous giving by partners has helped 77 families buy groceries and medicine and meet their rent obligations during a difficult season.

Building on existing relationships from relief aid following an earthquake late last

year and in partnership with local believers, VMissions workers in Albania approached government leaders in order to explore ways of caring for their communities. The Roma community had been hit especially hard as their sources of income evaporated during a strict shelter-in-place order that lasted for more than two months. VMissions partnered in the distribution of weekly food packets to more than 50 families for a period of two months during the time of closures, work that opened the door to sharing good news in a community with an emerging Christian presence.

VMissions invites donors young and old to show the compassion of Christ among these neighbors near and far. Gifts to My Coins Count will also help MCC distribute locally purchased supplies to vulnerable and displaced people around the world as MCC workers and partners identify needs.

VMissions announces two staff promotions

VMissions is pleased to announce the promotions of Abe Hartzler to Associate Director of Advancement, beginning June 15, and Tom Yoder to Ministry Coach, with a particular focus on the Balkans, starting September 1. Both are current VMissions staff members who have felt called to take on new or expanded roles.



Abe Hartzler has served as Event Coordinator and Ministry Support Coach since July 2019. Sensing a desire to engage the supporters and friends of VMissions in new ways and cultivate relationships with donors, Abe will assume leadership of the Advancement Team, a role left vacant by the sudden death of Steve Leaman on April 5, 2020.



Tom Yoder and his wife Karen served with VMissions for over six years in Albania and Kosovo, from 1994 to 2000. With extensive cultural experience in a mission frontier region, Tom has most recently been serving in a quarter-time role as Associate Mediterranean Regional Director, alongside Janet Blosser, Mediterranean Regional Director, who has announced plans to retire at the end of August. In addition to his missionary work, Tom has been a pastor, chaplain, and builder.

● Anna and the life-giving high five

Anna, the daughter of current VMissions workers, grew up in three countries in Central and West Asia. A third-year English education major in college, she is spending her summer in a short-term assignment with VMissions, teaching English in West Asia.

BY ANNA (*not her real name*)

In middle school, the game of the street was *urtganiki*, which consists of “ball dodging and life swapping.” In this Central Asian game, Team A stands facing each other roughly 10 paces apart with Team B in the middle. The irrigation ditches on both sides of our street serve as out-of-bounds markers. As the ball accelerates out from a Team A member’s hands, Team B players jump, dodge, and scatter, keeping steady eyes on the ball’s whereabouts. If, however, a skillful Team B player manages to catch the ball before it touches the ground, she gains a life. She can keep the life for herself or bestow it on an “out” teammate by high-fiving him or her. Wise players save a spare life or two and give the rest away to gain popularity or to give less experienced players second chances.

In the real world, though humans must dodge many hurdles, we do not have a way to store up multiple lives. Even Jesus only got one, and he chose to give his to us! His death paid for our sins, gifting us with eternal life. He spent his earth-time teaching, healing, and loving us, and he sends his Holy Spirit so that we can commune with him throughout our lives. So often I hear the gospel whittled down to sin and redemption. Beyond a muddled sense of some kind of “happily ever after,” such oversimplification gives the audience no understanding of what happens once we receive God’s forgiveness and cleansing. The gospel also includes what happens after redemption. It is about life, both the Trinity’s and ours, and how the two intersect. The gospel means we have a perfect Father, perfect love personified in Jesus, and a present, perfect guide in the Holy Spirit. But it also means we have new dreams, goals, and lifestyles.

Often these new differences create friction with the people around us who have not yet comprehended the gospel. Regardless of whether the friction results in sharing the good news or being persecuted for it, such friction must come if we have truly been transformed and are still living among the yet-to-be transformed.

Where I grew up, there was no incentive for nominal Christianity. Living into God’s plan costs local Christians opportunities, ease, and relationships. Why do they still accept God’s way? Why not just ditch it and live well according to the world’s rules where there are tangible benefits?



Throughout my many *urtganiki* games, I have had the privilege of playing the role of both life-giver and life-receiver. Whether the teammate I high-five back into the game does well or poorly, we feel connected more deeply because of the life-exchange. Similarly when we reflect on Jesus giving us his life, we feel more connected to him. The relief and joy I feel whenever a teammate high-fives me back into a game of *urtganiki* is a small taste of the thrill that comes from being allowed back into the presence and kingdom of God. Hearing or rehearsing the gospel and accepting it is like accepting God’s eternal life-transferring high five, one big enough for all humanity.

I accepted that high five when I was about four or five, and again on my thirteenth birthday, and again two years later at my baptism, and again daily when I wake up and greet my “High Fiver” in prayer.

As I reflect, read, and have conversations, I understand more fully what it means for me to have a godly life. As a 20-year-old, I still have much to learn. But as my education classes have taught me: you can have bad times, but they are only failures if you do not reflect and use what you learned to try better next time. Growing up in places where fake Christianity was pointless shaped my philosophies.

My hope is that you, dear reader, and your neighbors, classmates, coworkers, and relatives may accept God’s life-giving high five and engage in true life in the fullest sense of the word.



Dara, 16, spent the ages of 3 to 11 and 12 to 14 in North Africa. She is the daughter of VMissions Global Ministries Director Jason Showalter and his wife Carmen. She will be a senior this fall at Harrisonburg High School.

Artist's statement: *Joy and mourning*

Growing up as a TCK, I experienced a lot of opposites. I was always overjoyed to come to the States for the summer, but at the same time I would start feeling homesick for the places and people I had left behind. I would feel excited when we moved to new places, yet at the same time I felt sad about all the things I had to give up, sometimes forever.

The window is symbolic of all the windows into the lives of the people around me that were opened to me because of my TCK experience—learning the language and growing up surrounded by a mixture of my parents' culture and the culture of our friends and neighbors. I was able to understand their view of the world and their view of my faith. This then allowed me to understand my faith through fresh eyes.

So while I grieve the ending of these friendships, I can be thankful for all the conversations I was able to have and the relationships I was able to build. I'm learning to hold these contrasts together. I am learning to mourn the loss of friendships and important places while putting my life and the lives of the people I love into God's hands, trusting in his love and care for me.

One of my hopes is that God would keep showing me meaningful ways to bless and share his love with neighbors, teachers and friends, and to use my experiences from living overseas for his glory here.

Joy and mourning



● Two TCKs share their stories

Thankful for a life of paradoxes

Heidi Schoenhals lives in Thailand with her parents Mark and Sarah Schoenhals and her younger sister Hannah. They are jointly appointed by VMissions and EMM.

My family moved to Thailand when I was seven months old, and I am now 11. I like being a TCK because I get to see and do things a lot of people don't get to. For example, I have learned to do Thai dancing and to cook Thai food. I have made friends who live in many countries. But sometimes I don't like being a TCK because I don't really fit in anywhere. When I went to local school the teachers thought I was a genius because I was white, and the students bullied and ignored me because I was foreign. The only time I really feel like I fit in is when I'm with other



Heidi Schoenhals with her friend Sai.
Courtesy of Mark and Sarah Schoenhals

TCKs who understand me, no matter what country we're in.

When my family and I visit the United States, people often ask questions like, "Do you like living in Thailand?" or "Which do you like living in more, Thailand or the USA?" For TCKs, questions like these are very hard to answer. I like living in both Thailand and the USA. There is good

and bad about both.

In my imaginary, ideal life, I would live in Thailand, speak Thai, have local Thai friends, and be part of my Thai church. At the same time, I would go to American school (with Thai as the extra language), have American add-ons like doing gymnastics and going to the library, and I would see my extended family regularly. And, of course, have peace in the world, racial equality, no sickness, and no pollution.

The life of a Third Culture Kid (TCK) is full of paradoxes. Being a TCK can be challenging at times. But sometimes it can also be very fun. I am thankful God gave me the life that I have.

For different seasons blow different winds



Photo: Christina Lowe

Sidney Ramella, 17, is the son of Vince and LaVonne Ramella, who recently completed service in Istog, Kosovo, with VMissions. In their final two years of service, Sidney completed high school in the U.S.

Nearly seven years ago my family and I left our home in Phoenix, Arizona, and moved to Istog, Kosovo. I had just turned eleven. Now, as a high school graduate planning for the future, I have spent a good deal of time evaluating my past and how far I have come. As a third culture kid, I am often asked, "Do you ever wish that you hadn't left? Wasn't that hard? Do you feel like you missed out?" Personally, I struggled with these questions while I lived abroad. I would have nights when I would cry myself to sleep from feeling alone and imagining my childhood friends enjoying the unique moments of middle and high school together...moments I could never get back.

At the time I could not begin to see how warped my perspective of my life's priorities had become. Bluntly put, living in another culture is not easy or simple, whether it is the lack of understanding of the people around you (emotionally, ideologically, linguistically, etc.), or accidentally offending someone or being offended because of cultural variations. Then add being a teenager trying to understand who you are...talk about culture-shock!

At some point, I began to truly understand what it means to be a child of God. As people we like to identify and label things. That is good: it keeps order and gives structure to our plans and ideas. However, as I am sure many of us have at one point or another, I attempted to "over define"

Blown

BY SID RAMELLA

The bitter wind nips at my fingers, my nose.
Maybe it's a good thing...
This shifting in the wind.

For different seasons
Blow different winds.
Different seasons
Bring different opportunities.

As I read My Book,
The wind picks up:
Landing me on a brand new page.

myself. Sure, I am an American, a TCK, a young adult, etc. But oftentimes it seems that we blot out our most important identification, our foundation: we are children of God. With this fact in mind, suddenly, the fact that I am a TCK no longer seems to weigh on me. I will encounter misunderstandings because of it, of course, but I have a greater purpose and longing that my heart seeks after. Do I still wish I had not left Arizona? No—without Kosovo, I would not be who I am today. Was it hard? Of course! Jesus tells us life will not be easy (John 15:18-19). Do I feel like I missed out? Not on

the things that really mattered, no! I would not change a day of it, good or bad.

So, what about now? I am seventeen, a high school graduate. What can I do for the kingdom of God? I am learning to live a life for Christ, wherever I am, with whomever I find myself. God has removed the chains that bound me to my past and instead has used my past to point me ahead to my future. This fall, I will be attending Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, majoring in Pastoral Studies.

Back Home

A poem by Anna (not her real name), a TCK who grew up in Central and West Asia.

Click
The key slides back into the mom's hand
baby blue courtyard door creaks open,
not the nine-foot, double doors
that would allow the car to back out
down the driveway and into the street,
just the small, side door, the one for people:
Dark blue Eagle emblem passport carrying,
English speaking,
white Americans
but
not tourists.
Travelers.
Yes.
Travelers.
The car/plane/walk/taxi journey had been over thirty-some
hours.
Jetlagged, unshowered,
all rhythms all gone...
The family of five rumble their suitcases on the grey cement.
Our key went click;
My baby blue gate swung wide
bidding us enter
Home.
In English "house" and "yard" and "barn" are separate words
but *hooli* is a slidable, flexible, interchangeable word for all
three.
It is the square where trees, animals, and children
Grow, play, and change
Each in their own way.
Two mud brick walls and L-shaped living quarters
make up the square with the garden in the middle
and cement walkways
connect the different sections of the living quarters.
Each doorway has a small entry way
For shoes
Making the distinction between outside shoes and inside socks
complete.
The dust lay thick on our walkway.
No one had swept for nearly three months.
We had been Away
on "home leave"
where you rarely unpack
your suitcase
or real thoughts

because if you do you'll just have to
repack
rethink
retell
another relative, supporter, parents' friend's child, or stranger
on the bus.
All of this all over again
in a few hours
or days
Or--if you're lucky--
a week.

Some people scatter their stories:
a feeling to Aunt Somebody
an inspiration for nameless cousin dear
a song to his father's best man's grandpa,
but no one sees the Full Picture
Everyone sees individual brushstrokes
Of me
Of my brothers, of my parents, of my fellow TCKs,
and I am left to wonder
what everyone would say
if they saw the whole, my painting
framed with soft, brown wood
set behind a gently smudged triangle
of glass.

But
No one but God sees the whole thing,
I have no single human to help me examine my full self,
so sometimes
I forget
the whole painting.
I focus on what those around me can see.
It's a form of politeness.
They won't understand,
can't.
It's not their fault,
so I pretend that the part of the picture they see
is the whole thing.
It's easier that way.
It's not a lie,
perhaps.
Maybe it is,
but when no one sees the whole thing
except God
it sure is easy to lie.

● A world united under God's love

Itzel Sanchez is the daughter of VMissions church planters, Armando and Veronica Sanchez. A graduate of Bridgewater College, she lives in Harrisonburg, Va., and works as a surgical assistant. She was a participant in two E³ Collectives, in Greece and in Jordan.

BY ITZEL SANCHEZ

Where are you from?" This is a typical question you might ask when getting to know someone, one that would usually be simple to answer. In my younger years, my answer was a simple, "Well, I am from Harrisonburg."

That was typically followed by, "No, but where is your family originally from?" So, I would respond, "Oh well, we are from Mexico." The conversation would then proceed to identify whether I was born here or there and how I had "no English accent" like others who are not born in the US. As I grew older, I really had to ponder how I identified myself.

I was born in Mexico, but, at the age of two, I was brought to the United States as my parents pursued the American dream. Initially, my parents came with the little they had; I stayed with my grandmother until my parents were well established and I could be reunited with them. I first learned English in school, attending ESL in preschool and kindergarten. As a family, there were other things that we were learning.

God was at work within my family. My mother became acquainted with a Mennonite lady during her pregnancy with my younger brother. They remained connected after he was born, and she began introducing my parents to the gospel. At the trailer park where we lived a neighboring family began taking my brother and me to Sunday school. My mother eventually started attending services and accepted Christ. My father would attend services from time to time but still had other priorities. God had a very unique way of calling his attention to ministry, and since then he has not turned back.

As the years went by, my parents grew stronger in faith and eventually became pastors of Enciende Una Luz. Fast forward a few years in ministry, through Mennonite Hispanic Initiative and VMissions, my parents have planted the Shalom congregation in Waynesboro. Throughout this time, I have been highly active with the worship ministry and the youth ministry—two other passions of mine.

For most of my teenage years, I identified as being Mexican and did not claim to have anything to do with being American. We spoke only Spanish at home, we ate Mexican food, and we still practiced our Mexican traditions. I celebrated my quinceañera and still celebrate holidays such as *Navidad* on December 24 and *El Dia de los Reyes* along with the American ones. As I grew older and went to college, I realized that I identified as Mexican-American. So now, when people ask me where I am from, I reply, "I was born in Mexico, but I was raised right here in Virginia."



Itzel Sanchez. Courtesy photo

I have had the blessing of serving on a few mission trips and have also assisted in after-school tutoring. I realize now that the fire to serve others was sparked as others invested in me and my community. God had not only placed a church behind our trailer park; he had also put it in the hearts of his followers to reach out to our Hispanic community. They developed an after-school program three days a week in which we were assisted with our homework and also taught the gospel. As I now tutor other children, I remember that I was once a child with the same struggles, and yet with God's guidance and a lot of hard work, I was able to earn my master's degree in Intercultural Services in Healthcare.

I strive to see others as God sees us—as one body of Christ, as being equal. To love others as he has loved us regardless of ethnic background, social status, or what language we speak. God's love and grace have further shaped my identity as his child. I will never forget the chills I experienced on a mission trip as we worshipped together on a Sunday morning—people from different backgrounds, different languages, all singing for the same purpose. It was as if heaven had manifested itself for that moment. That is the world I strive to live in. A world united. A world that represents God's love.

Prepared in Cusco for service in Virginia

Hannah Shultz serves as a tranSender in Harrisonburg, Va, working in music ministry with Spanish-speaking children.

BY HANNAH SHULTZ

My identity and understanding of the world and the gospel are forever changed by the opportunity I had to grow up as a TCK in Cusco, Peru. I remember an empowering conversation with my mother before leaving for Peru, where I was given a say in this decision to move. Making this choice at age seven deepened the degree to which I took on the role of “missionary.” I, along with my parents, was called to bear witness to who God is, to Jesus’ forgiveness and salvation, and to the Holy Spirit’s empowerment to share this good news throughout the world.

I am currently on assignment with VMissions through the tranSend program. The Lord has ignited within me a passion to empower Hispanic parents in their calling to disciple their children in the way of Jesus.

I recently finished a 12-week Scripture-based Zoom music class for young children and their parents called *ALABAD!* [Praise!]. I’ve received overwhelming affirmation regarding the importance of this work and will be writing the curriculum for our next class (ages 5-7) this summer.

I can see how God has uniquely equipped me for this task, weaving experiences together in a way that leaves me speechless. God had a greater purpose in teaching me Spanish than I realized. Through friends and an internship at Manantial de Vida (a local Hispanic church) in the summer of 2017, God graciously enabled me to continue engaging in Latino culture using my Spanish.

Growing up in Peru gave me a deep appreciation for various aspects of the beautiful Latino culture: Life is seen through a collectivist rather than an individualistic lens! I love the fact that people are so valued that every person must be acknowledged in greeting and parting. And, how wonderful that worship is expressed through dance!

I resonate with the children who participate in *ALABAD!* because they share the TCK experience. These children are shaped by their parents’ culture as well as by the American culture, giving them a unique blend of culture and world view. As when I lived in Cusco, these children are likely to feel their minority status; they need to hear that Jesus is with them in times of loneliness.

In Deuteronomy 31:19 God tells Moses, “Write down this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it.” God knows that we, humanity, lose our way and need to be reminded constantly of the truth of who God is. My prayer is that the gospel and the truth in the songs we sing in *ALABAD!*

will remain in the hearts of our children and serve as reminders of God’s faithfulness even in hard times when they might be prone to lose their way.

Our class for infants this spring was not designed to be online, so it was discouraging to imagine teaching a 3-year-old and a 13-month-old via Zoom. Little did I know that their older siblings would also be able to participate be-

cause they were home together. God knew! Eli (age 5) loves to remind me, “It’s time to pray!” His parents are teaching him that Jesus is healer, so he confidently asks God to end the coronavirus so he can play with friends again. Eli shares Jesus’ love with his sister, Diana, giving her hugs when we sing our hello and good-bye songs, “...hola Diana, Dios te ama a ti.”

Jesus loves our precious TCK children. I am honored and overjoyed to be a small part of God’s big plan in and through these beloved children. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of music, cultures, and for sending your son, Jesus, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.



Hannah Shultz (top right) on an *ALABAD!* Zoom call with children in her program. Courtesy of Hannah Shultz

Call to Prayer: Cherishing what God speaks

BY RUTHY HERSHEY

"I see a picture of a strong tree... You have deep roots, but I sense that in this next season that your roots are going to go even deeper; they are about to hit an underground water table, and you will see growth like never before!"

My husband, four children and I had just finished up serving in India for nearly nine years. We were headed back to the States for a one-year sabbatical. On the journey back, we stopped for an annual prayer conference for workers from all over the Muslim world. A woman was praying for me who had never met me before. I recorded her words and cherished them in my heart.

Truly, the next season proved to be a season of much growth. We spent time reflecting and asking God how and where he wanted to take us deeper. He was faithful in pointing out and leading us through areas that were ready for growth and increased fruitfulness. There was a point where I sensed him speaking to my heart: "You've done it! Your roots have reached the underground water table! This water is my deep love for you. Just soak it in. Let it fill you up until it is overflowing out of you." I saw a picture of a vast ocean, with me floating on top of the water, resting in his love. The view zoomed out. I became a speck and the view of the ocean became more and more vast. I was amazed to think about how he has an ocean of never-ending love like this for each one of us!

I researched a bit about the water table and discovered a map of the world with different shades of blue showing the underground water of different depths all over the world. Suddenly it dawned on me that, as we are filled with his love, we can move from place to place with his living water overflowing in every place that he takes us. As strong, rooted trees, we can move, as Jesus described, "like the wind," wherever the Spirit leads us.

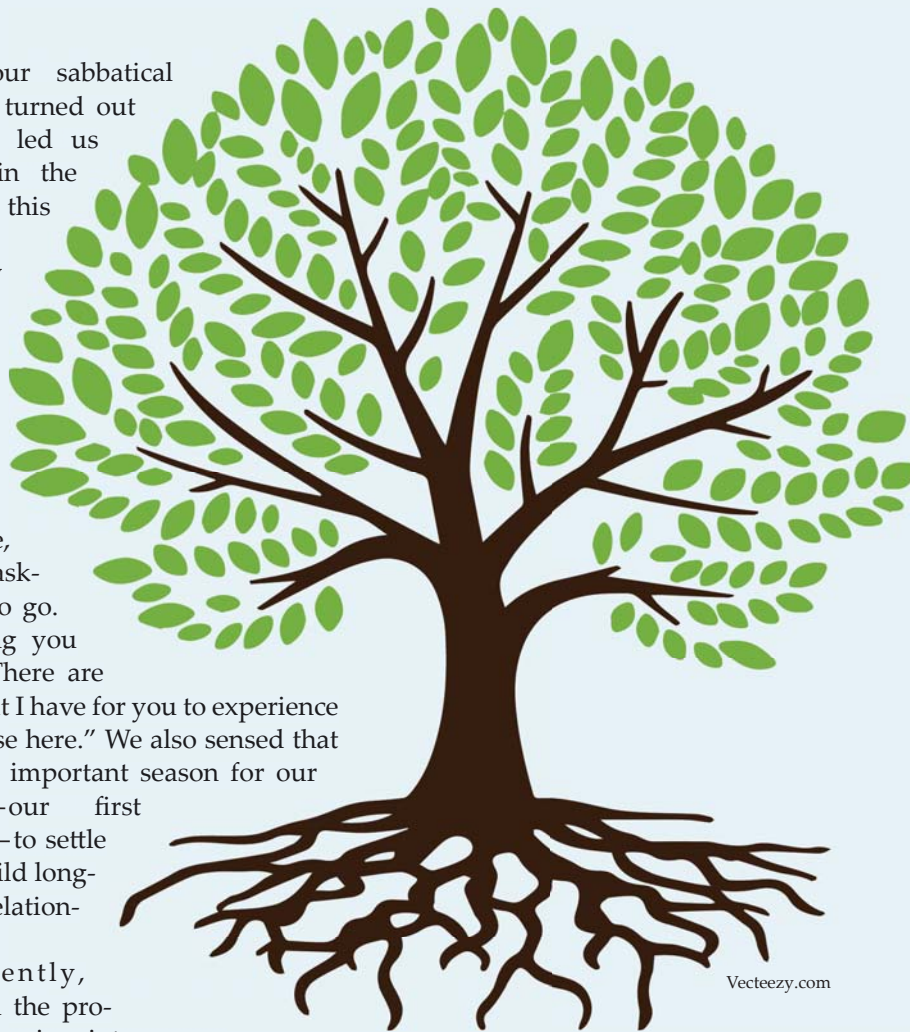
As our sabbatical ended, it turned out that God led us to stay in the States for this season.

Every time we asked about returning to India, he gently spoke, "I'm not asking you to go. I'm asking you to stay. There are things that I have for you to experience and release here." We also sensed that it was an important season for our children—our first disciples—to settle in and build long-lasting relationships.

Currently, we are in the process of moving into a new home that the Lord has provided for us. As I reflected on another move, I realized that in our 14 years of our marriage we have moved 14 times, not to mention all the transitions each time we came back to the States for home ministry assignments! I wondered sorrowfully how that reality has impacted our children.

Then God brought me comfort by reminding me that we have not only survived all of this transition but have been able to thrive. He showed me how our children have felt secure because their roots are in us, their parents. Now, as our oldest child turns 13 and begins the journey from child to adult, she must form her own roots in the Lord.

My prayer for her and for all of our children is that they will be rooted and



grounded in the never-ending ocean of God's love for them. Through all the transitions, I pray that they feel the gentle, yet very strong arms of God, comforting them, protecting them, and creating a greenhouse of space around them for their roots to grow deep and strong. I pray that as they are filled up with his love and find their identity and security in him, they will also have the freedom to be all that God has created them to be, with rivers of living water flowing out of each of them every place that he leads them.

Ruthy Hershey is in process for a new assignment with VMissions. She and her family live in Millersville, Pa., where her husband Michael serves in a VMissions assignment with Immerse International.



● Worker profile: **Dan and Mary Hess**

Service program: transForm

Assignment:

We serve in the city of Lezhë and the town of Milot, Albania. Our focus is building relationships to lead many to Jesus. We are involved in children's ministry, discipling new believers and training emerging leaders. Having served in Albania from 2001 to 2005, we feel blessed to have the privilege of living in Albania once again.

Biggest challenge:

Our biggest challenge has been learning to work in a shame-honor culture when we come from a guilt-truth culture. Our desire is to help the Albanians live in a culture of forgiveness, given the cultural norm of taking offense and holding grudges.

Biggest joy:

As we sought the Lord and his plans for us in Albania, God has continued to open doors for us in children's ministry. We live in a large apartment

complex, and there are many children who live there. As we interacted with them and their parents, we decided to do a children's Bible school for a week. It was a blessing to see how the numbers of children grew each evening, and how their mothers stood at a distance in the beginning of the week, and by the end of the week they were helping us with the crafts and snacks, as well as listening to the Bible stories.

At the encouragement of an Albanian believer, we went to the neighboring town of Milot to do a children's Bible school. It was an exciting week as many children came, with the numbers growing each evening. At the Lord's leading, we started children's meetings once a week and English classes.

The Lord led us to some Christian men who we have befriended along with their families. As we were beginning to encourage the men to get involved with us, the coronavirus came and we chose to come back to the States for a time.

Despite the challenge of not being present, the Lord has continued to work. Our Albanian friends told us

that there are families in Milot who are out of work and in need of food. We organized a food distribution program and soon were supplying food for 30 families on a weekly basis. The men stepped up and took charge of the food program. They also started to meet weekly for prayer and Bible study and have shared the Word and prayed with the people who are coming to receive food. It has been a great joy for us to see these men step out and share the love of Jesus.

A typical day:

We start our day with prayer and Bible study together. Our daily work involves language learning with a tutor, preparing for and running children's programs, attending prayer meetings at church, as well as household things like daily grocery shopping. Beyond this, since we want to focus on building relationships, we often go out for coffee with local church members or neighbors in one of the many coffee bars in the cities and towns. These are great places to hang out, meet new people and practice our language.



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

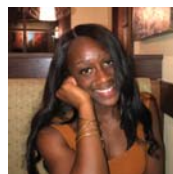
VMMissions workers commissioned in 2020



Victoria Barnes
EMU campus ministry,
in partnership with
Every Nation Campus,
Harrisonburg, Va.



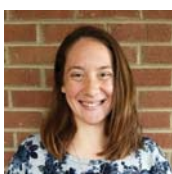
Tala Bautista
Community ministry
with Charlottesville
Mennonite Church,
Charlottesville, Va.



Bryce Bouldin
JMU campus ministry,
in partnership with
Every Nation Campus,
Harrisonburg, Va.



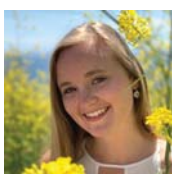
Elena Buckwalter de Satalaya (pictured with husband, Freddy)
Children's, youth, and women's ministry, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network, Iquitos, Peru



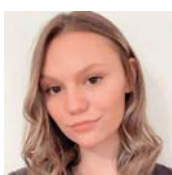
Lydia Musselman
College ministry, in partnership with Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va.



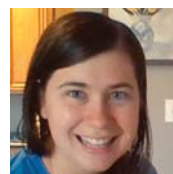
D.J. Mitchell
Healing and addiction ministry, Harrisonburg, Va.



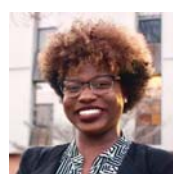
Anna Renfro
Education ministry, Mannheim, Germany



Kailey Ross
Community ministry with Lynside Mennonite Church, Stuarts Draft, Va.



Hannah Shultz
Children's music ministry with Iglesia Enciende Una Luz, Harrisonburg, Va.



Gabrielle Thorne
JMU campus ministry, in partnership with Every Nation Campus, Harrisonburg, Va.



Nik Tucker
EMU campus ministry, in partnership with Every Nation Campus, Harrisonburg, Va.



Steve & Laura Campbell
Church leadership development, Podgorica, Montenegro



Shawn & Laura Green
Church planting and leadership development, Termoli, Italy



Michael & Ruth Hershey
International student and prayer ministry, Millersville, Pa.



Dan & Mary Hess
Church planting, Lezhë, Albania



Steve & Bethany Horst
Church leadership development, in partnership with EMM, Nam Yuen, Thailand



Mike & Risha Metzler
Church planting (Mosaic of Grace), Harrisonburg, Va.



Mark & Sarah Schoenhals
Church leadership development, in partnership with EMM, Det Udom, Thailand



Dini & Klementina Shahini
Education ministry and team leadership, Lezhë, Albania



David & Rebekka Stutzman
Church planting, Mannheim, Germany



Rafael & Solange Tartari
Church leadership development, Lezhë, Albania



John David Thacker
Church planting, Charleston, W.Va.

