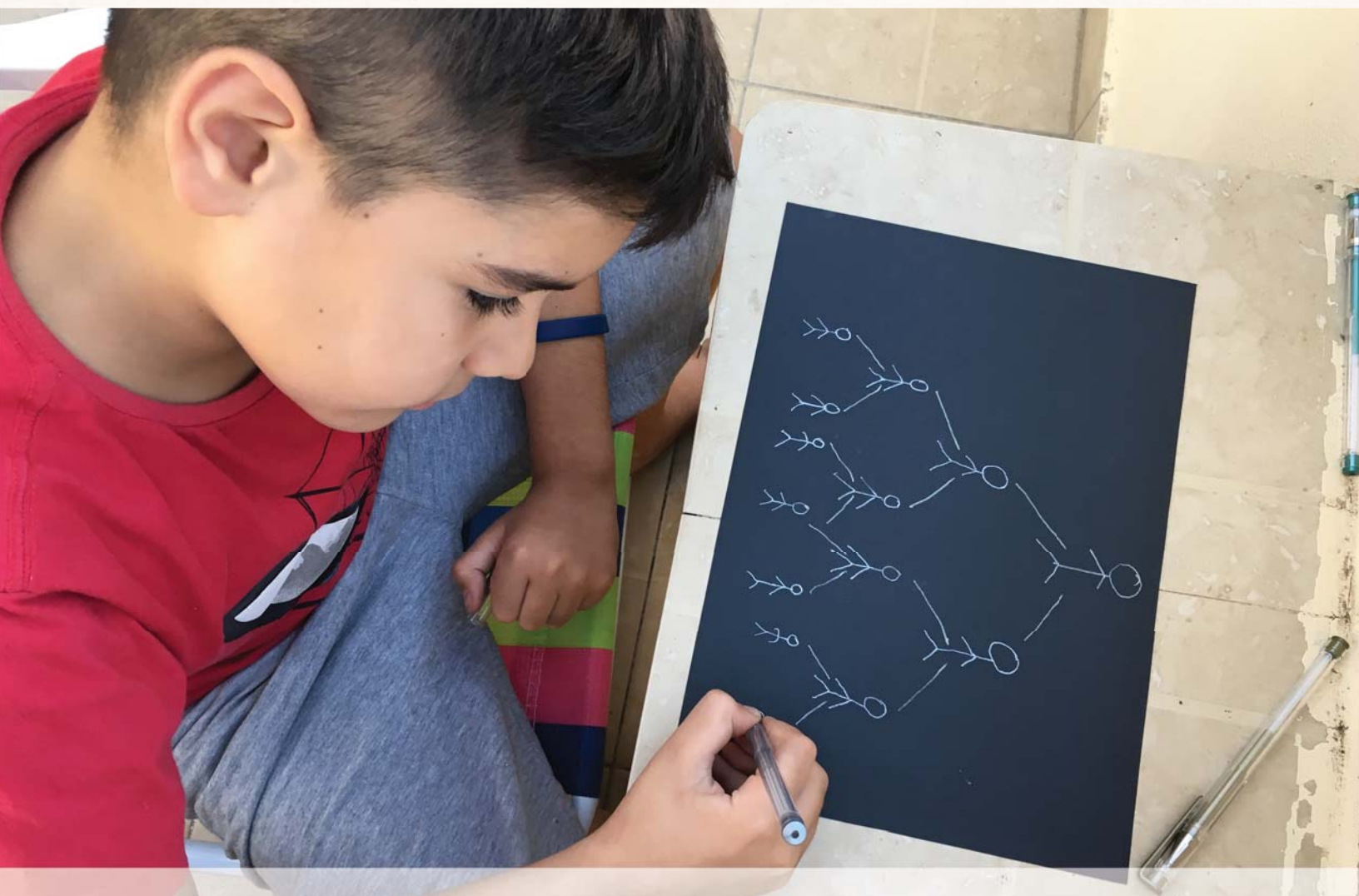


Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Fall 2021
VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 3



Vision for Multiplication



● **A Call to Shkodër**

PAGE 4



● **God's Arithmetic**

PAGE 6

 **VMMissions**

From the President



Patient Ferment

BY AARON M. KAUFFMAN

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough. —Mark 13:33 (NLT)

Many mission leaders are excited about the concept of multiplying disciples through people movements. Proponents tell of amazing results in previously unevangelized people groups, where thousands are coming to faith through local evangelists, all with minimal help or input from traditional cross-cultural missionaries.

I celebrate this move in Christian missions toward indigenous leadership and simple approaches to discipleship that can easily multiply among new believers. It is a welcome change from models that foster unhealthy dependency on foreign workers.

Yet I also have some caution, especially when the emphasis is on speed and numbers. Often the figures quoted seem too good to be true. Were local evangelists pressured to report inflated numbers in order to garner Western monetary support? Is Christian depth sacrificed for the sake of methods that are easy to imitate?

I'm drawn to the picture of multiplication painted by the late Alan Kreider in his book, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. As Kreider explains, the early church grew not through carefully crafted mission strategies, but through the lived faith of everyday believers. As their countercultural lives sparked questions among seekers, they were prepared to explain the hope they had in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15). Yet seekers were not quickly pushed to say the sinner's prayer and confirm their spot in heaven. They had to endure a lengthy discipleship process in which, slowly, over time, their lives came to embody the message of Jesus they were taught. Only then were they baptized and integrated fully into the life of the church.

In short, the multiplication of disciples in the early church was about patient trust in God's work to transform lives. And over time, it worked. Despite persecution, after three hundred years, Christians spanned the Roman Empire and accounted for as much as 10% of the population.

What would happen if we multiplied disciples by investing in just a few seekers in our circles of influence? What if we started at home or in our own neighborhoods?

I'm banking on that approach in my own life. The first sphere of discipling-making is with my own children. We pray together. We read Scripture. We talk about God's work in our lives. We celebrate our triumphs and admit our mistakes. Little by little, my children are embracing life with Jesus. My two daughters were baptized just last year. And one of them now leads a Bible study with her school friends.

The next sphere of disciple-making is my neighborhood. We pray regularly for each household on our block. We know and help our neighbors, and they help us. We also share the reason for our hope in Christ when authentic opportunities arise. Just last week, a neighbor told my wife Laura about some surprising life changes he observed in a family member who has become a Christian. This gave her the chance to share how following Jesus impacts our lives. We pray the conversation will continue.

Multiplying disciples is patient work, like working yeast through a batch of dough. But if we persevere, God's kingdom will emerge, like fresh bread from the oven, ready to share.

Features

4 A call to Shkodër — Hopes for multiplication bring the Tartari family into a new assignment.

6 God's Arithmetic

Mark Schoenhals shares the story of the persistent pursuit of multiplication in rural Thailand.

8 Engage. Establish. Equip.

Empower. — Carlin Kreider's embrace of a strategy for empowering leaders has spelled growth for both him and those he disciples.

9 Moving toward multiplication

As Mike and Risha Metzler co-pastor Mosaic of Grace, their eyes and energy are focused toward new friends and neighbors.

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Cover photo: Paulo Tartari, 10, draws a representation of multiplication. Paulo serves with his parents Rafael and Solange and sister Sofia in Shkodër, Albania. See page 4. Photo by Rafael Tartari.

VMissions to Host Serving Leader Cohort

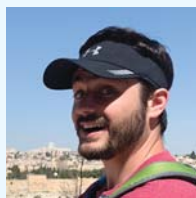
In partnership with the Center for Serving Leadership, VMissions will host a Serving Leader Cohort for business and nonprofit (ministry?) leaders, beginning October 21. The cohort will gather at Faith Community Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, meeting the third Thursday of each month for six months. Led by seasoned leaders Jon Byler and Nelson Okanya, cohort participants will leave monthly training sessions with one specific action to apply in their respective areas of leadership, building on these areas of growth in subsequent gatherings.

The Serving Leader training helps seasoned leaders implement strengths-based leadership in existing teams and move toward healthy succession in organizational transitions. Newer leaders will learn how to clarify their vision, mission and values, to identify their own areas of strength, and to build teams that will move a business or nonprofit toward long-term transformation within the organization and the broader community.

Last year, several members of the VMissions staff participated in a Serving Leader Cohort. It was a rich time of interactive learning resulting in immediate opportunities for application. Applying learning from the cohort has helped VMissions hone its vision, align organizational culture with shared values, identify strengths among staff and move toward more effective teamwork based on the unique gifts of each member.

Learn more about Serving Leader Cohorts at: <https://centerforserving-leadership.com/events-cohort-training>. For more information about participation in the Harrisonburg cohort and possible scholarship opportunities, contact Jason Showalter at jason.showalter@vmmissions.org.

VMissions Appoints Two New Mission Workers



Zachary Dey is serving as pastoral resident at Williamsburg Mennonite Church (Williamsburg, Va.) He has a strong

sense of call to pastoral ministry and sees his life as one of being on mission. He has had formative mission experiences in Appalachia with Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP) and in Argentina, helping communities and building relationships.



Diomedes Franco is in the early stages of planting a church in the Dominican Republic that is welcoming to at-risk youth. He envisions

a church body that is equipped to reach out to marginalized youth and minors who have been released from jail or who have been helped through their programs. His dream is that this church will be a greenhouse for young leaders who can be trained and launched into reaching more youth for Christ.



VMissions President Aaron Kauffman (left) with his brother Ryan at Bike Shenandoah. "We obeyed this verse," Aaron wrote. Courtesy photo

Riders Raise Over \$25,000 at 25th Annual Bike Shenandoah

On Saturday, September 18, nearly 100 bicyclists gathered at the grounds of Eastern Mennonite School to participate in the 25th annual Bike Shenandoah Cycle for Service. The clear, sunny skies and mild temperatures made for a perfect day to ride the country roads of Rockingham County.

As a special way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ride, many cyclists could be seen wearing commemorative jerseys, specially ordered for the event. Also a special feature for the 25th anniversary was live music from "Lightning Lucas," Lucas Schrock-Hurst, which cyclists enjoyed over lunch as they returned from their routes.

The event raised over \$25,000 to be shared evenly among its partnering entities, which include Virginia Mennonite Missions, the Stephen R. Leaman Memorial Endowment for Missions, Mennonite Central Committee, Roberta Webb Child Care Center, NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center, and Our Community Place.

Throughout its 25 year history, donors have helped raise over \$525,000 through their participation in this event.

Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/20 to 08/31/21

Special Projects \$1,564,335	Special Projects \$1,388,810
Mission Fund \$1,079,676	Mission Fund \$873,000
Income Total \$2,644,011	Expenses Total \$2,261,810

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

● A Call to Shkodër

Rafael Tartari reflects on how the call to be multiplying disciples has led to a new ministry venture for him and his family in Shkodër, Albania.

BY RAFAEL TARTARI

A vision of multiplication requires a heart totally focused on the kingdom and its expansion, a heart rich in compassion for the lost. The cycle of the multiplying life is this: to be born, to grow, to mature and to multiply. This natural process involves constant transformation. It begins when we realize our need—not for religion, but for Jesus. It comes to completion with our commitment to the multiplication of new disciples.

Multiplying by making disciples is our calling. We need to believe in the potential of “one-to-one,” the impartation of life from “one to another.” This is nothing new, but it is in fact the driving force for the growth and evangelization of nations. We know that this thing called discipleship is the secret of the multiplying church.

Earlier this year, I met an Albanian friend, Gusti, at a conference. Gusti shared with me his vision of planting a church in northern Albania’s largest city of Shkodër. He told me about the strategies they use to preach the gospel and make disciples in that city. At that same conference, I had the opportunity to share with the gathered group that my

family and I were praying for God’s guidance to serve in a new city. After the conference ended, Gusti invited us to serve with him in Shkodër. He emphasized that he and his family had been praying that the Lord would send a family with hearts ready to love people and engage them in a discipleship process.

After many visits between our families in which we prayed together and talked deeply about our common vision and Albania’s needs and challenges, we felt God move our hearts to this new challenge. We agreed to serve together in unity for the expansion of the kingdom.

Gusti and his family have served here in Shkodër for eight years. They work primarily with students, as Shkodër is the only city in northern Albania with a university. Many of the students come from other northern cities where there is no witness for Christ. Thus, a great many of them have their first contact with the gospel when they come here to study.

Soon after this decision, I sensed a confirmation from the Lord through a group with which I am affiliated, the Northern Albania Pastors Alliance. The local leaders of this group chose me to serve as the new coordinator. Thus, I am excited to envision how this role can provide a great opportunity to open new contacts and paths for those students who are being won and transformed by Jesus. It energizes me to think that when they return to their cities they can serve there or perhaps even plant new churches!

We moved from Lezhë to Shkodër in June. We have the challenge of a new dialect of the language, but we are adapting well. We face a financial challenge since the cost of living is higher here than in Lezhë. Despite this challenge, we are filled with much hope for a new generation of Christians who will be God’s witnesses in this nation.

When we arrived, Gusti told us about a young student named Klisten who gave his life to Christ in October 2018. Gusti told me that it took Klisten a long time to understand how someone can have a personal relationship with God.



Gusti (left) is a new colleague of Rafael and Solange Tartari in Shkodër, where he has been serving with his family for eight years. He is pictured with Klisten (center), who gave his life to Christ as a student in 2018, and who in turn prayed for and led Xhiliberto (right) to faith in Jesus.

Photo courtesy of Rafael Tartari.





Rafael and Solange Tartari with Paulo and Sofia overlooking Shkodër, Albania, from Rozafa Castle. Located on the Adriatic Sea, the city of Shkodër has been in continuous habitation since the 4th century B.C. and is recognized as the capital of northern Albania. Known for being religiously tolerant, it boasts both mosques and Islamic schools and Roman Catholic cathedrals. Photo courtesy of Rafael Tartari.

The city is full of students like Klisten and Xhilberto who are ready to hear the gospel. We know that for many of them it is not an easy decision. When they return to their cities, they are likely to face problems with their Muslim, or even Catholic families, rooted in their traditions and religiosity. In some cases, they may even be expelled from their families or suffer family persecution because of their faith in Christ.

Our task is to lead these disciples into a daily life of prayer and knowledge of the word of God. We must live in total dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, because he alone will lead the sinner to repentance. We have responsibilities—to new converts, to those who have heard nothing of Jesus, and to those who have heard but not responded to the gospel. According to II Timothy 4:2, we need to preach in season and out of season. We praise God that some of those into whose lives we have sown will remain and bear fruit!

Klisten is now engaged to Ola. This young woman came to study in Shkodër six years ago from her hometown in the Kukës region, which, according to local statistics, is the most gospel resistant region in Albania, being totally Muslim. Ola heard the gospel here in Shkodër through Gusti's ministry. As a married couple, she and Klisten will be part of a new generation of lives changed by Christ, devoted to the glory of God, bearing witness here in Albania!

We must make disciples for the kingdom of God. We are not setting goals for our own convenience, according to our own agenda. This is not something we choose to do. It is something for which God has chosen us! We are living in a time when everyone has their own way of thinking, as if there was no standard, no direction. But Jesus is Lord of everything and everyone, and he made disciples. Every day we have to decide to obey Jesus' call again. Our life on this earth is fleeting. May we come to maturity, bearing the fruit of multiplying disciples—lives saved and transformed by Jesus. Multiplication in mathematics is a natural operation, but the multiplication that Jesus does is a miracle!

He was a Catholic by training and thought he had Jesus because of his religion. But in time, Klisten understood that the new birth proposed by Jesus is different from being a religious person; it is restoration of broken relationship with God through Jesus, resulting in a changed life that will impact others! Just five months after meeting Jesus, Klisten led a group of high school students during an evangelistic event. Xhilberto was part of the group. Though Kristen shared the gospel with many teenagers, Xhilberto was special. Klisten prayed every day for Xhilberto, that he would understand the gospel.

After the evangelism program was over, Klisten continued to share and spend time with Xhilberto. Soon, he eagerly shared the wonderful news, "We have a new brother! Xhilberto has just accepted Christ!" What a blessing! A new believer like Klisten multiplying his faith!

Rafael Tartari serves with his wife Solange and two children in church planting and discipleship ministries in Shkodër, Albania.

● God's Arithmetic

Mark Schoenhals is keenly aware of the challenges and rewards of carrying big hopes for multiplication while doing the small work of discipling the few in Thailand.



BY MARK SCHOENHALS

Throughout the Bible, we see God's particular enjoyment of multiplication. In Genesis, God tells Adam and Eve, and then Noah, to fill the earth. God chose Abram to become a family and a nation as numerous as the stars, to be a blessing to the world. Later, Jesus poured his life into a few disciples, envisioning that the good news would be carried through them to the ends of the earth. At the beginning of Acts, there were 12 apostles, and then 120 disciples praying on the morning of Pentecost. By evening there were 3,000 people baptized. Soon, the number had grown to 5,000, with more added daily. Timothy was instructed to take what he learned from Paul and teach it to reliable people who would also teach others – a key to multiplying disciples and leaders.

The Bible also tells the story of our human experience with failure as well as our tendency to adopt the more moderate goal of mere addition. Moses trained Joshua in spending time with God and leading the people. Joshua spent many years in Moses' shadow and became a great leader, but he didn't raise up a leader after him. Elisha followed Elijah, but who was there to succeed him? Samuel mentored leaders, primarily Saul and David. He experienced grief in watching Saul's life unravel and although David's line continued, subsequent generations stumbled badly. On a human level, personal faithfulness seems to present us with

all of the challenge we can handle. When we see addition, we sense God's blessing. But multiplication? Impossible!

Life Enrichment Church (LEC), a network of house churches in a forgotten rural corner of Thailand, was planted with the vision of multiplication in the late 1990s. How might God reach this impoverished, minimally educated corner of the country?

Wit and his wife Ae on a night out with Mark and Sarah.

Photo by Mark Schoenhals

Those first pioneer missionaries knew that it would not happen by building buildings and hoping people would come. Instead, they mounted their motorcycles, braving heat and dust – or monsoons and mud – to spread seed broadly, looking for the few who would respond.

They poured into those few, teaching them to share what they were learning with their families and neighbors. As soon as there were a few believers, they taught them to worship together without outside help. Family and relational connections carried the good news to other villages and the process was repeated, this time, by local people who had been raised up as disciples. In those early years, the multiplication happened quickly. Yes, it was messy, but disciples made disciples, who made more disciples. Within a few years the house church network had grown; it became self-sustaining and independent of the mission agency.

As LEC continued to mature, the vision of multiplication was not forgotten, but the expectations were perhaps not as high as at first. While the church continued to sow seeds and share the good news broadly, the number of committed disciples and house churches mostly stayed the same. People were added and others faded away. Energy and enthusiasm dwindled. Perhaps they were like the disciples who gazed upon the crowd of over 5,000 and were so ready to discount the five loaves and two fish in their hands, despite having seen Jesus' power.

But, Jesus doesn't look at how little is in our basket. Instead, he invites us to imagine—to watch and see what he can do when we ask him. In the past few years, as we have intensified our prayer for multiplication, God has been teaching us. Naturally, we want to see big things now, but God has been teaching us to expect big things by starting small and watching him do the multiplying. We do not have the capacity to mentor large numbers of people, but as each person disciples a few people who mentor others, multiplication begins to happen. One of the most rewarding parts of our work has been hearing the people we disciple tell about how they've taken the things they've learned from us and are training others.

One of the men that I have been mentoring is Wit. We meet intentionally now every two weeks, studying God's word and learning to live in obedience to it, as well as studying lessons in discipleship and leadership. Wit is continuing to mentor new disciples, but now that he has been chosen as a leader in the church network, he is also now mentoring other house church leaders. How I mentor Wit is not just





In Isaan culture, "If it isn't fun, it isn't worth doing." Thus, Mark's discipleship journey with these friends is filled with simple fun and friendly banter. From left: Mark, Lek, Wit and Yut. Photo by Mark Schoenhals

about his growth, but about the persons he is mentoring, as well as the house church members that those leaders are mentoring. Thus, my mentoring is multiplied into his network of at least 8 people. As they continue to grow, I hope that some of them will continue the chain of multiplication within their networks of relationships.

The goal that I must embrace is not just to mobilize a single new generation of leaders, but to mentor leaders who will train and mentor more leaders. If each of those leaders is mentoring disciples who make and mentor more disciples, the potential for exponential growth can be realized! When our focus is just on the next person, we are merely adding a few people, at best. It is when we envision not just the second generation, but the third and fourth and more generations – that we see God's multiplication at work, and we marvel at the miracle of what God can accomplish.

The light of Christ is shining in this corner of Thailand. Twenty house churches are beacons in the darkness. Yet, there are over 700,000 mostly rural people, 99.8% of whom have never heard of Jesus, living within a thirty minute drive of at least one of these scattered house churches. How will they hear? If we add a few people here and there, we

will never reach them. But, when disciples make disciples, who then make more disciples to the third, fourth, and more generations – we'll stand back in amazement at how God's arithmetic works. Is it really possible that this corner of "the ends of the earth" will no longer be unreached, but will have a house church in every village? Absolutely! How? By God's Spirit and by the multiplication of disciples following Jesus and obeying his command to make more disciples.

These principles of multiplication are compelling and applicable not just in the Bible or on some foreign mission field. What might God be speaking to you and your church community about multiplication? When we listen to God's heart and respond in obedience, God will accomplish more than we can ask or imagine! Can you audaciously believe that Jesus can take the 25, 50 or 100 members of your church family and multiply them to yield a harvest—30, 60 or 100 fold? Can you look at the five loaves and two fish in your "basket," and ask the God of the universe how he might want to multiply them?

Mark Schoenhals serves with his wife Sarah and daughters Heidi and Hannah in Det Udom, Thailand.

Engage. Establish. Equip. Empower.

As a discipler with Every Nation Campus and partner in mentoring a number of VMissions tranSend interns, Carlin Kreider knows what he is about as he walks with college students.

BY CARLIN KREIDER

My faith journey began with an amazing encounter with the Holy Spirit. But what followed were years of directionless and purposeless wandering. I knew something was missing but I didn't know what. When my wife and I began attending Divine Unity Community Church, I began to see that what I had been missing in my walk with God was having someone walk closely with me in a discipleship relationship. I asked my pastor if he could disciple me. It was experiencing and understanding the power of this discipleship process that ultimately led me into the role I enjoy today as a full-time campus minister with Every Nation Campus (ENC). My desire is that no one else would have to experience the confusion and disorientation that I felt as a new believer.

In our context, we use the concept of the "Three F's" to identify the three-fold call we have as disciples to relate with God, relate with lost people, and relate with God's people. We follow Jesus, fish for the lost, and fellowship with other believers. Beyond this, any discipleship process must take these principles into account:

1. Every person is valuable to God.
2. Every church, campus ministry, and small group can grow.
3. Every minister should prepare others to minister.
4. Every disciple should make disciples.

Using these four principles we have developed what we call the "Four E's." Because lost people matter to God, we *Engage* our culture and community. Because every church and small group will grow as it is built on Christ, we *Establish* biblical foundations. Because ministry is not only for full-time ministers, we *Equip* believers to minister. Because everyone is called to make disciples, we *Empower* disciples to make disciples. Here is how it works:

As a student at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Oksana began attending our church, Divine Unity Community Church. She soon became a part of our initial efforts to begin a chapter of ENC at EMU. She began inviting her friends to attend Bible studies, large group meetings, and Sunday services (*Engage*). While not all of her friends stuck around or even showed up, a few did. They became grounded as disciples with strong biblical foundations. Two of the young women with whom she walked through the basics of following Jesus ended up getting baptized (*Establish*). After participating with and learning from Oksana in small groups (*Equip*), they then began to lead their own small groups (*Empower*). After graduation, Oksana decided



Oksana Kittrell (center) with Vicki Barnes (left) and Natallie Brown. Photo courtesy of Carlin Kreider

to commit to an additional two years of interning in campus ministry in a partnership with ENC and the VMissions tranSend program. One of the girls she disciplined, Vicki, graduated the next year; like Oksana, she opted to participate in the internship program through ENC and VMissions. The second young woman, Natallie, is still in school and is currently one of our student leaders on campus. She is also seriously considering participating in our internship program after she graduates.

This process isn't always as smooth as the example above might make it seem! However, following this process with intentionality prevents us from becoming unbalanced, given the common tendency for us to engage only in the ways that are most comfortable for us. For me, engaging with others is the step that comes least naturally. Left to my own devices, I would be comfortable with a group of two or three students who want to talk about the finer points of theology and philosophy. Others, on the other side of the spectrum, may preach the gospel to hundreds of students but not have a plan for teaching them how to read the Bible and apply it to their lives. Multiplication happens when we go through the entire process without leaving out any steps. At the end of the day, Jesus' last command was for us to disciple the whole earth. Seeing this come to pass will require all of us, filled with the Holy Spirit, to make disciples who in turn make disciples!

Carlin Kreider is a campus minister with Every Nation Campus. He attends Divine Unity Community Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

● Moving Towards Multiplication

Mike and Risha Metzler and those who join with them as part of Mosaic of Grace Church are discovering a new world of relationships and opportunities for multiplication as they turn their attention to their neighborhoods.

BY J. MICHAEL METZLER

As the days grow shorter and the fruitful season of summer comes to an end, plants and animals alike harness their energy towards multiplication. In our garden, strawberry plants send out runners that grow roots as they go to find new soil where they can establish new plants. In wild places near and far, male whitetail deer will soon spend all their energy fighting each other ferociously for the opportunity to mate with does. Living things grow and multiply.

From the beginning, God created humanity to grow and multiply. The Lord promised Abram that he would make him into a great nation through whom the nations would be blessed. When the Holy Spirit poured on to the believers at Pentecost, God birthed the Church. The wind of the Spirit scattered the seed of the gospel from Jerusalem to destinations hundreds of miles away. The power of the Spirit transformed Peter who preached boldly to all who would listen and sent Paul to the Gentiles with the gospel. As the Spirit sent out believers to embody and proclaim the reign of God throughout the Roman Empire, new congregations of healing and hope sprang up. Today, the Christian faith continues to spread rapidly in the Global South.

Most of us are aware of the huge challenges facing the church in North America. We can point a finger of blame at the dominant postmodern culture, which is rapidly becoming post-Christian and dismissive of the gospel. As outside threats to our faith grow, we are tempted to try to preserve what exists already instead of trusting God enough to move us out of our relational comfort zones. Yet let's face it: our lives are often too distracted to disciple our children let alone share the gospel in meaningful ways with those who might not even know what—or who—they are looking for.

Do we really believe that we've been given good news that transforms lives, including our own? Last fall, a neighbor surprised me with a simple statement: "I want to

serve with Mosaic." This friend describes himself as an atheist and knows little about the Bible. To my knowledge, he has never participated in a worship gathering with Christians. Yet he challenged me with this question: "Where is Mosaic blessing our community? I want to join you." His question and simple statement

led to him joining Mosaic of Grace Church as we served a meal to our homeless neighbors through Open Doors.

Now, a year later, I've invited this same friend to study the Bible with our family. He has agreed. There's a new level of excitement in our home about reading scripture together as we prepare to read the creation story with our neighbor around the campfire this fall. What will God do? What will God say to him? To me? To us? How will God's Spirit transform us as we study scripture together?

Moving towards multiplication takes time, energy and patient trust in the One who makes the harvest. Yet multiplication is also simple. J.R. Briggs, a church planter who is ministering near my hometown in Lansdale, Pa., caught my attention with

this statement: "All of us are missionaries disguised as good neighbors." All of us. His words resonate with me. Early Anabaptists were known for being good neighbors—seeking to bless those who lived around them by embodying God's generosity and self-donation even while enduring misunderstanding and persecution. As we follow their example and seek to bless our neighbors, relationships will form. Opportunities for discipleship will open up. And where there are new disciples, the church will grow. And, hopefully, multiply for the glory of God.

Mike Metzler is a church planter and co-pastor of Mosaic of Grace, Harrisonburg, Va., with his wife Risha.



Mike Metzler and his sons Joel and Tobias went fishing with VMMissions Ministry Coach Skip Tobin (left) and the neighbor Mike references in this article. Photo courtesy of Skip Tobin

Call to Prayer: Lord, Teach Us to Pray!

BY LIZZETTE HERNANDEZ

Lord, teach us to pray," asked one of Jesus' disciples in Luke 11:1. They didn't ask Jesus to teach them to walk on water or cast out demons, but to pray. They had seen Jesus model a life of prayer. Yet, prayer didn't come naturally to the disciples; they knew they fell short. Just prior to this, Luke 10 records how Jesus invited his disciples to join him in his mission. The first command he gave them was to pray: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." So the disciples asked Jesus to teach them.

Jesus' command to pray has resonated within our team of Latino church planters. We long to see a fruitful harvest, a multiplying movement of Jesus' disciples. In God's kingdom we are born anew to multiply, and Luke's gospel has been teaching us that multiplication is preceded by prayer. So in response to the Spirit's invitation, we have been meeting once a month for the last year to pray. As we've come together, God has done new things. First, he's helped us see the potential in the fields in which we labor: "Look at the harvest! Gain a new perspective!" There are more people ready to open their hearts to Jesus than people ready and trained to share about him with them. This is what God sees, and this perspective should make us sense the urgency for new workers.

Second, we are learning that God alone is the one who sends and commissions people. It all lies in his power. And this is a supernatural thing! The phrase "send out workers" in Greek is *ekballo*, which means to draw out violently, to be overcome by an opposite force, to cause one to depart in haste. What a puzzling description of being sent out! This sounds like a disruptive call that drags people away from their normal lives and routines and pushes them towards a new ultimate purpose



Times of extended fervent prayer at the VMissions worker retreat in July were a highlight and blessing for those who received prayer and for those who prayed. Photo by Carol Tobin

in life, namely God's mission and glory. So we need to pray for this supernatural call into people's lives, which only God can do.

Third, we've discovered that as you pray for laborers for the harvest, you grow in your willingness to be one of them! You catch the *kairos* moment, the Spirit fills you with compassion that overcomes fear. As we pray, we become willing to go.

There have been signs around us that God is answering our prayers! Alfonso Alvarado, church planter at Iglesia Menonita Monte Moriah, started monthly vigils with his church, praying for a breakthrough of God's Spirit in the community. A new Bible study was started in their neighboring community of Timberville, Va, and they sensed the potential of starting a new daughter church there. Soon, a family from the church stepped up to lead this

new group. Prayer indeed precedes multiplication.

Armando and Veronica Sanchez, church planters of Shalom Church in Waynesboro, Va, have prayer meetings every other Tuesday and are planning a prayer retreat with some of their leaders. Juan José Lagos, a church planter in NC, has a weekly prayer meeting with his church on Thursdays. Fifteen new believers have been baptized in the last couple of months within our Latino congregations, and there are more to come!

God has determined to bring about a harvest through the prayers of his people. He delights in answering those prayers, doing "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20).

Lizzette Hernandez is Latino Ministries Coach for VMissions.

Worker profile: **Lydia Musselman**

Service program: tranSend

Serving since: 2020

Assignment:

My assignment is to partner with Eastside Church and VMissions in support of college students in Harrisonburg. As a part of this ministry position, I share a house with three wonderful young women on Old South High Street in downtown Harrisonburg. We eat meals together, play games, read, laugh, tackle problems together, rest, and most importantly join in prayer together. In addition to the many ways that we simply share life with each other, I also have led discipleship groups, weekly prayer on the campuses, and Bible studies with women from both Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and James Madison University (JMU), nurturing the cross-cultural connection this represents, as well as watering our souls with the living water!

Biggest challenge:

Other than situations surrounding the pandemic, one of the biggest challenges was connecting with young men on campus. We had two great young men from EMU join us for church with their sisters but without a male college ministries leader, I could only do so much in connecting with them. It was a joy to go to lunch with the first-year student and walk with him in some challenging times and decisions. We would appreciate prayer that God would provide a male leader for this ministry and guidance regarding how to engage the young men on campus who are thirsty for Christian fellowship.

Biggest joy:

One of my biggest joys was in walking with a first-year student who connected with Eastside Church through a family friend. She grew roots in our church community and then felt called to be baptized. Her growth galvanized a group of ladies to do a discipleship class together. They invited friends to church and fellowship gatherings, and even brought a friend to our women's Bible study on Zoom. She sees mission opportunities in all of her relationships and is now eager to welcome first-year friends into the kind of spaces that helped her to grow.



A typical day:

Each day of the week at our ministry house and on campus looks a little different. Mornings begin with coffee before we gather at 7:00 for a short devotional, sharing, and prayer. I generally work in the mornings, though some days I break up the morning by joining students for prayer at the campus fountain. Lunch is sometimes one-on-one discipleship and friendship time with a housemate or a student. The afternoons include what one of my

students named "Coffee & Christ," at a local coffee shop. This sometimes enables me to build relationships with students studying there. At 6:00 p.m. we have dinner as a house family, often welcoming others to break bread with us. Evenings are full of games, movies, and reading before bed. On Sundays, I am on hand at Eastside, again, praying first with the prayer team and then welcoming and connecting with the college students and young adults.

Members of the VMissions Board of Directors answer the question, “Why did you decide to serve on the board?”



Shelley Abline

Burlington, NC
Member at Large | Treasurer

“I served with EMM in Hong Kong and Egypt. Missions has a special place in my heart, and I am grateful for this opportunity.”



Chris Conley

Candler, NC
District: Tenn./Carolina/Kentucky

“I have admired VMissions’ work and wanted to become more involved.”



Luz Contreras

Harrisonburg, VA
Member at Large

“I’m passionate about missions. My ultimate goal is to be a medical missionary.”



Liz Driver

Cheverly, MD
District: Potomac

“Having served abroad myself, I would like to assist in any way possible with developing and improving VMissions’ programs.”



Lauren Francisco

Chesapeake, VA
District: Calvary

“I have a passion for ever-evolving mission work with long-term, measurable outcomes.”



Clair Good

Dayton, VA
District: Southern

“I was invited to serve on the board and have been an active cross cultural missionary and church planter.”



Reuben Horst

Dayton, VA
Member at Large | Secretary

“I see [serving on the board] as an avenue to answer God’s call on my life to mission.”



Johnny Hsu

Fairfax, VA
District: Potomac

“I would like to learn more about the ‘nuts and bolts’, decision-making, administrative, planning and executions of the board.”



Chris Johnson

Harrisonburg, VA
Member at Large

“I am deeply passionate about the mission of God advancing through both local and global missions.”



Lavonne Lehman

Toano, VA
District: Eastern | Chair

“I worked for VMissions for many years, and am honored to be able to still participate on the board.”



Juan Carlos Malvaez

Harrisonburg, VA
Member at Large

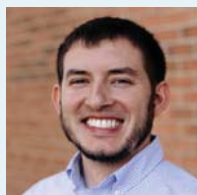
“I want to get involved in the development of multicultural church planting.”



Becky Roberts

Harrisonburg, VA
District: Harrisonburg

“I deeply value the richness of a global community of faith. I felt in my spirit that it is time to become more involved.”



Paul Yoder

Harrisonburg, VA
District: Central | Vice Chair

“I have been a long-time VMissions supporter with interest in contributing in new ways.”