

# Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Summer 2023  
VOLUME 9 • ISSUE 2



## Each of Us on Mission

**IN THIS ISSUE:** PARTICIPATING IN MISSION  
IS MORE THAN "GOING"



THIS YEAR'S THEME:  
**THE WHOLE CHURCH  
ON MISSION**

- God Is on Mission
- One Body, One Mission
- **Each of Us on Mission**



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 **VMissions**



# From the President

## What's a Missionary?

BY AARON M. KAUFFMAN

"Aaron, I don't think you're called to be anything but a missionary."

I had felt a growing sense of call to missionary service since my teenage years. These words from a local Ethiopian church leader reinforced that call while I was serving in a year-long mission internship. The outer call confirmed the inner call.

Confident of God's direction, I finished college, majoring in missions. I pursued a master's degree in language teaching in order to have a skill to offer in a mission assignment. My future spouse, Laura, assured me she was open to such a vocation. We got married and finished our schooling. After two years of work – I as a teacher, Laura as a nurse – we were ready to serve overseas.

Our family's three years of missionary service in Colombia were deeply challenging and fulfilling. We learned to love the language, culture and people. We saw students and neighbors come to faith in Jesus at the school where we taught and through the witness of the local church with which we partnered. We built lasting friendships. It was hard to leave when our first term came to a close. Yet we felt called to be further equipped for future service.

We returned to Virginia so I could finish seminary, hoping to go back to Colombia as soon as possible. Two years of study stretched into four. Our family grew. The assignment we thought we were preparing for no longer seemed likely to materialize. Where was God leading us?

"Would you ever consider a role in mission leadership?" This question from Loren Horst, then president of VMissions, opened a new chapter in my life. I joined the staff and began to learn what it took to support others in mission, and to partner with the global church. Two years later, I was named as the new president. It was not the path I had envisioned. But God's call seemed unmistakable. Was I still called to be a missionary?

Over the past decade, I've learned more about what it means to live an everyday missional life. We invest in the faith formation of our four kids. We build meaningful relationships with our neighbors and the families we get to know through the public schools. We pray for those far from God and look for opportunities to share the hope we have in Jesus. We support missionaries financially and pray for them. These are things all Christians can do as participants in God's mission.

Yet I also believe God gifts some uniquely as apostles and evangelists (Eph. 4:11). Like Paul, they have a specific call "to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard" (Rom. 15:20, NLT), or, I might add, properly understood. Perhaps the word "missionary" is best reserved for them. We're all called to be missional. Some of us are called to be missionaries. Together, we partner with God, who is making all things new. To God be the glory.



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BY PAM LEHMAN

## Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/22 to 06/30/23

Special Projects \$1,673,147	Special Projects \$1,739,399
Mission Fund \$755,999	Mission Fund \$864,245
<b>Income</b> Total \$2,429,146	<b>Expenses</b> Total \$2,603,644

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

## Transforming

**Editor:** Jon Trotter

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**Cover:** Mary Hess (left), VMissions worker in Milot, Albania, joined by members of her Ministry Support Team Pam Lehman (center) and Judy Hielt during a visit this spring. **See article on page 9.**  
Photo courtesy of Pam Lehman

## 2024 Perspectives Course Offered in Harrisonburg



Learn about God's heart for mission and your part in the story. Save the dates for the next **Perspectives** course, with classes

each Wednesday evening from January 10 to May 1, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

Wherever and however you share the good news of Jesus, Perspectives is a powerful opportunity to explore your calling in God's mission. Learn more about the course at [perspectives.org/course-overview/](https://perspectives.org/course-overview/)

## Riders Hit the Road to Support VMissions



Thirty-nine riders from 18 different churches came together from all across Virginia to spend a beautiful weekend riding in the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Motorcycle for Missions event. Participants journeyed through the Blue Ridge mountains, made new friends, and shared what God has been up to in their lives.

This year's ride raised over \$14,000 towards the Mission Fund, which helps VMissions recruit, equip, send, and support workers all over the world.

Plan to join the ride the first weekend of June 2024—another great chance to build relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ across Virginia.

## VMissions Awarded \$1.2M Grant for The Soil and The Seed Project



Virginia Mennonite Missions has received a grant of \$1,222,766 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support and expand the work of The Soil and The Seed Project, a faith formation project based in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The Project is being funded through Lilly Endowment's Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative. The aim of the initiative is to help parents and caregivers share their faith and values with their children.



Project director Seth Crissman leads a team of artists, writers and musicians to create music, art and "Little Liturgies" that can be

used at home in the ordinary moments of life. So far, the team has produced seven albums and Little Liturgies that correspond to two cycles of the Revised Common Lectionary. Many of the song lyrics use direct quotes from Scripture. "Our work is to come alongside churches and families as the good news takes root and God bears good fruit in our lives," said Crissman.

"Being and making disciples of Jesus is the heart of what we do at VMissions, and that starts at home," reflected Aaron Kauffman, VMissions president. "I love using the beautiful songs and liturgies from The Soil and The Seed Project to nurture faith with my own children. Lilly Endowment's grant will enable us to make these resources available to a lot more people."

Go to [vmmissions.org](https://vmmissions.org) to read the full announcement.

## New Workers Appointed



**Isaiah Hartzler**, tranSend assignment serving with Mosaic of Grace, Harrisonburg, Va.



**Devin Stipe**, tranSend assignment with SLAQ (Servant Leader Quest) and Early Church, Harrisonburg, Va.



**Kaelin & Brooke Thrasher**, 264 OSH college ministry as Marketplace Workers, in partnership with Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

## Worker Reappointments

**Joyel Allen**, as an Associate Worker serving in campus ministry at Mary Baldwin University, Staunton, Va.

**Michael & Ruth Hershey**, as Associate Workers with Immerse International and in bivocational volunteer ministry.

**Olivia Kasidiaris**, as an Associate Worker serving in campus ministry at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.

**Yacoub Rasul** (name changed), church planter among the Arabic-speaking community in Harrisonburg, Va.

**Dini & Klementina Shahini**, serving at Lezha Academic Center and the Guri I Themelit church in Albania.

**Rafael & Solange Tartari**, serving as church planters and disciple-makers in Shkodër, Albania.

**Norma Teles**, serving as director of the Joshua Center in Lezhë, Albania.

**Ken Wettig**, as an Associate Worker serving with Coracle, as SLAQ (Servant Leader Quest) director and working at Coracle's retreat center.

# Mission on the Farm

Marketplace Worker Ben Yutzy lives out God's call to minister to those in need of the gospel at his dairy farm in Timberville, Va.

BY BEN YUTZY



**A**m I a missionary?" My young niece asked me recently.

"Well, what do you think?" I replied.

"I'm having trouble answering that question. My parents are

missionaries, but I don't know if I am."

"What does it mean to be a missionary?" I asked.

"To go to another country and tell people about Jesus," she replied simply.

Today was another day that I woke up and went to work. I checked some reports, made some decisions, worked through a variety of issues with my team, drove a tractor, moved hay bales with a skid steer, and checked on the cows and calves. All the usual stuff. And sometimes I wonder too: *Am I a missionary?*

Cows need to be milked and fed. Hay needs to be mowed and stored. Crops need to be planted and watered. It is rather unremarkable at times. Until the calves get out. Or the tractor breaks down. Or a cow suddenly dies. Or the power goes out. And there are a lot of potential mishaps like these in my field of work.

How does being a missionary of the good news of Jesus fit into any of this?

I grew up working on my family dairy farm. I had many thoughts of becoming a missionary in a far away place. I did some short-term forays in a few faraway places. I took the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course, and even had some serious plans to go overseas for a longer amount of time. And yet there was something that was drawing me back.

God had a plan for me. A plan to be a missionary here and now, not waiting until I reached some far

off place. I began by asking Jesus, where are you sending me? The workplace was obviously where I spent the most time, and after I asked that question, it became the obvious choice.

Jesus gave me eyes to see my coworkers with compassion and in great need of the gospel. I invited some of the guys I work with to walk with me in discipleship, and the Lord gave me a few faithful men. These men are now walking in discipleship with their coworkers. They have become missionaries on the farm, sent by Jesus to tell the good news to their coworkers. They use the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) method as a simple, yet profound, way to study the Bible and be the church.

Part of my day on the farm involves spending time praying with one of my managers, Eduardo. He has an employee, Juan, who was not performing well. His coworkers were getting tired of his lack of cooperation. Eduardo and I prayed together that he would have the words to speak to Juan's heart. Then Eduardo went and spoke with him.

Farm workers watch the Easter sunrise over the manure lagoons with Scripture and sharing.







Some of the men gather for a Bible study at the farm.

(Right) A busy day spent covering the bunker silo.

Photos courtesy of Ben Yutzy



It turned out that Juan, who goes to a local church, was trying to distance himself from his coworkers who smoke and use bad language, and as a result, they didn't want to be near him either, because he acted superior and ungrateful to them. Juan's coworkers were still giving him a ride to and from work each day, and offered him some of their own food without even getting gas money in return.

Eduardo shared his own testimony of being self-righteous and looking down on those who don't go to church. But now he knows he must have compassion on those who are sinners, because he wants God to have compassion on himself, a sinner.

After this conversation, it was obvious to me that something had changed in Juan.

I had a few minutes to talk to Pedro over lunch. He just recently stopped drinking alcohol, as he felt God was compelling him to give it up during his participation in a DBS group. He told me that he can now be present with his former drinking buddies and not have any temptation to drink. He is praying morning and evening for them to also come and find the newfound peace and confidence that he has in God.

I also spoke to Alexandro as he came up to me offering to share some of his food. I asked him what he is learning in his DBS group. He told me that he really had no interest in God before Rafael invited him into the group. He was an atheist and suicidally depressed. But now he is beginning to believe that God does exist and is good. He then went on to share about the very hard life that he and his family have gone through. He is starting to recognize that God has been present through it all.

This day of mine that I described isn't too unusual. Some days I feel like I have more important things to do than to talk to my coworkers about Jesus or to pray. Sometimes I avoid sharing the good news because I already feel overwhelmed with all the things I have to do. Work on a farm often feels never-ending and overwhelming.

It used to be that I went to church on Sunday and went to work on Monday. I was going and doing all that was expected of me, but very little of it required God to show up. Church was something separate from my work. I went to work, but instead I needed to be sent into the workplace by Jesus. I went to church, but instead I needed to be joined to others as sent disciples who prevail against the gates of hell.

Am I a missionary? When I began this journey, no organization sent me across the corn field. No one was calling me a missionary. But I believe that Jesus sent me.

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21) Is there a greater sending authority? I believe Jesus has called me to join him on his mission. "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Matt 28:19) Is there a greater mission? Jesus gives me opportunities every day to join him in his mission and make disciples in everyday, ordinary environments and situations like work on a farm. Do you want to know Jesus as your sending agent and be an everyday, ordinary missionary like me?

*The names of Ben's coworkers have been changed.*

*Ben Yutzy serves alongside his wife Risa as Marketplace Workers with VMissions in Timberville, Va.*

# Pilgrims on the Silk Road

Serving on the Launch Team in Central Asia has opened doors for the gospel in a country long closed to missionary activity.

BY PAULO SILVA (NAME CHANGED FOR SECURITY)

**T**wenty years ago, we arrived for the first time in Central Asia, the heart of the ancient Silk Road. Our daughter was eleven months old at the time. After some years, the Lord blessed us with a son, too. Looking back to all the cities we traveled to or lived in makes my heart be filled with gratitude for our good Father's protection and provision along the way. We live to glorify God's name, to make every effort to make his name known wherever we go. As we do that, we learn to know ourselves more and how we can continue to grow to be more like him.

The Lord's plans are perfect. Many times along the way, we had to let go of our own plans and agenda to take up God's plans. Many times there were sorrows, tears and disappointments while we tried to sow the good news in the dry lands of hearts that never had heard from the Lord.

Sometimes it was painful to say goodbye to move to another place, leaving dear brothers and sisters behind. But it was also like turning to a new page in a book. And that is how the story of our pilgrimage continues, in this vast land along the Silk Road. After living for so long in Kyrgyzstan, we crossed the border to our new amazing city.

If you have already moved to another country, you know how difficult the first year can be. You don't understand the language, or in some cases, the languages! Central Asian countries have many languages spoken in them. There are so many things you don't know. How are things done here? Who should you go to in case of an emergency?

That was one of the reasons that the Central Asia Launch Team's vision was so attractive to us. A specialized team to help newcomers to learn the language and culture while they adapt in the new country for a period of two years. We come alongside these workers, and like Barnabas, we help them, encourage them and do everything we can to help them to thrive in their ministry after the first two years. Another part of our ministry is to bless the wider community through child safety train-

**We cannot forget our calling: to be witnesses wherever we go. We try to make authentic friendships and through that, we sow the good news of the gospel.**

ings and being a consultant for domestic violence issues. There are some English-speaking schools that welcome this kind of training for their staff.

At the same time, we try to be like Barnabas with local leaders and their families as well, through what we call "shadow ministry." Each of us has the goal of mentoring and praying together with at least one local leader. We cannot forget our calling: to be witnesses wherever we go. We try to make authentic friendships and through that, we sow the good news of the gospel.

In this region, it is very important for us to be careful how we share the good news and with whom we share it. You never know who the person you are sharing with is. The person could report your sharing as a proselytism to the authorities, and that can bring negative consequences that might affect your permanence in the country.

On the other hand, we need to be bold and not afraid of sharing the good news. It is a dependence on God by the Holy Spirit through prayer. We ask God to bring truth seekers into our path who may have questions about Islam or Christianity. We need to be ready all the time, looking for opportunities, creating opportunities in our conversations with taxi drivers, in the parks, on the streets, and in open market bazaars. This may involve inviting someone to a cafe or even to our house to have some tea. This kind of readiness and intentionality helps us to develop relationships and build trust that we hope will bring us to a point where we have the opportunity to share the good news.

We take the opportunity to share as much as possible with those we think we may not meet again. With those we have the opportunity to build a

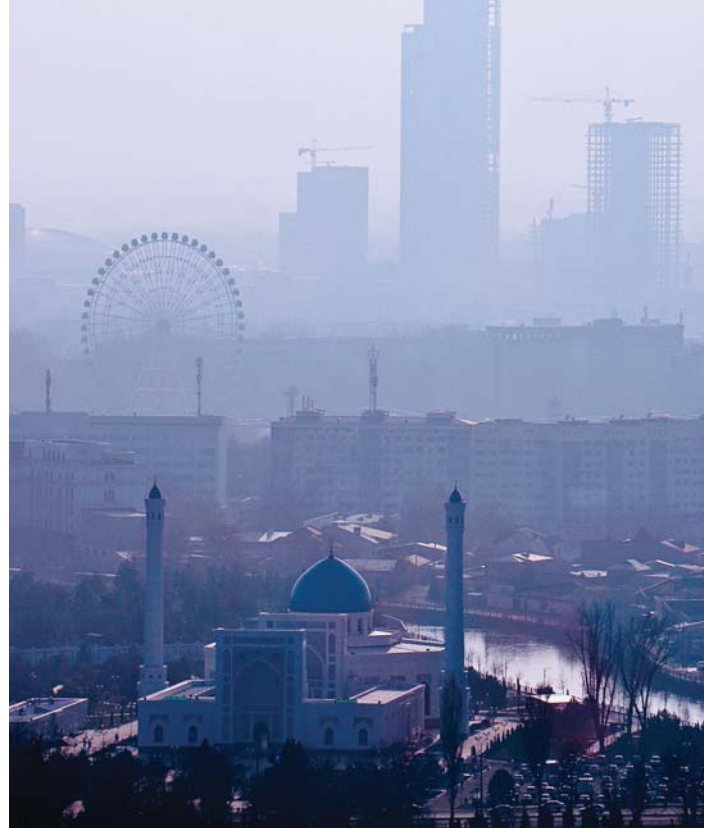




relationship with, we introduce our faith slowly to them.

We look for people who show signs that God has already been working in their hearts. They might be people who are open to talking about the Bible, who are interested in knowing more, or even those who talk about their holy book, the Q'uran. Then, God can guide us into a spiritual conversation, and we have a chance to invite them to continue talking in another place. So far, this happens most often with taxi drivers.

Some local events are a good opportunity to share the good news as well. For example, during the month of the sacrifice commemorating the time when the prophet Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, we can contextualize by sharing that Jesus is our Father's sacrifice for humanity.



Being intentional in meeting people at local events also provides us with important opportunities for relationships and sharing the good news. As a family, we decided to set aside a special day every month to invite a local family to our house to strengthen the relationship.

We have many challenges: language learning, finances, paying attention to our mental and emotional health, raising our teenage children. But we think that the opportunities God has given us to share the good news are too precious to be overshadowed by these challenges.

We are seeing more and more people applying to come to this country! More opportunities are opening for workers with professional skills in areas like agriculture, irrigation, information technology, English as a Second Language teachers, doctors and physiotherapists. More recently, language students are also welcome. That fills our hearts with joy to see God's 'love letters' being sent here to be read for the first time by people that have never heard about God's plan of salvation.

This is the time for this country! After years of prayer we are seeing doors open that were closed for so long. How long will they stay open? We don't know. You may have a similar vision to the one Paul had when he was invited to cross over into Macedonia to help them. What are you waiting for? "Come and help us!"

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*Paulo Silva serves with his wife Ana and son Marcos (names changed) in Central Asia with VMMAssions.*

# There's More to Mission Than Going

Faithful financial supporters and prayer partners are answering God's call as equal participants in the Great Commission.

BY JON TROTTER

Prior to taking up a missionary assignment, one needs to, first, hear God's call and then respond in faith. Those who invest time in prayer and discernment with the community of faith build their future ministry on solid ground. When trials come, the clarity of God's call and its confirmation in the church provides a worker with confidence as they engage in ministry.

In a similar way, praying for and contributing financially to the work of mission is also a response to God's call. This backbone of support is essential for VMissions to exist and do its best to train, send, equip, support, and encourage people as they serve near or far. It is an equal partnership that joins in God's movement wherever and whenever it is happening.

Donna Suter, a member of Gospel Hill Mennonite Church, Fulks Run, Va., has had a burden to pray for mission workers and their families since she was a young mother in her twenties. "Missionary pictures were usually up in our house along with those of beloved family members," she remembers.

When she was young, her dream was to travel and visit missionaries around the world, a dream her husband shared. They thought if they did that, they would know better how to pray for them and their work. The dream of that kind of travel was never realized. Nevertheless, Suter has been a faithful prayer warrior and donor to missions, sending small monthly gifts to multiple VMissions workers continuously over an astonishing 30 years.

Suter's giving connects her to the people she gives to and their work. Giving the way she does connects her with far more people than she could ever visit, noting, "I pray for everyone I give to. I think my prayers are probably worth as much as the small amount that I give each of them. Maybe more!"

Curt Stutzman, pastor of Weavers Mennonite Church, encourages the body of Christ to use all its parts and gifts to support the mission of God

to make disciples throughout the world. "We each have a variety of gifts, and the way we support each other with those gifts is *critical*. When the arm of the church is working in Thailand, the organs and blood and sinew of prayer and giving must support it," he said. Stutzman's congregation is a sending church for the Mark and Sarah Schoenhals family, who have been serving since 2009 in Det Udom, Thailand.

Stutzman is inspired by neighbors and fellow church members who give "exorbitantly" of their time and energy to refugee families in the church's neighborhood, people who give sacrificially to missions, and those who regularly ask for prayer for those who are serving Christ in other areas of the world.

At 85 years old, Suter asked the Lord how to use her remaining time in this life. The answer was to engage deeply in prayer for needs, great and small, around the world. As

part of her commitment, she prays regularly for VMissions staff and workers alike.

A lifetime of faithful praying and giving has made an enormous difference. In Suter's case, over the years that small amount each month for missions has added up to a significant sum. Most importantly, her giving has connected her to the call she has to pray for those who are able to go where she has been unable to go. Many others have also faithfully joined God's work in prayer and sacrificial giving as participants and co-laborers in the commission of Jesus.

Stutzman strongly encourages this response in faith to God's call. "My prayer is always that we can recognize and respond where God is calling each of us, and that we are willing participants in every way: with our time, our prayers, our resources, and yes, our lives," he said.

**"We each have a variety of gifts, and the way we support each other with those gifts is *critical*."**

—CURT STUTZMAN

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Jon Trotter is Communications Manager for VMissions.



# Worker Support on the Ground

Ministry Support Team (MST) members find new insights when visiting workers overseas.

BY PAM LEHMAN



Partnering with mission workers on the field gives Ministry Support Team (MST) members the opportunity to share in what God is doing throughout the world. It was especially meaningful

for me personally to go visit Dan and Mary Hess, workers whom we support through their MST, in their ministry location of Milot, Albania.

As members of the MST, my husband Gerald and I meet and pray with Dan and Mary once a month via Zoom. This gives each member of the MST an opportunity to hear praises and concerns directly from them, and we spend time in prayer with them. These monthly meetings give us a chance to encourage Dan and Mary through the Holy Spirit's promptings, and we also pray for them throughout the month, seeking direction from the Lord. These meetings via Zoom are significant and essential to our team in supporting Dan and Mary and their entire ministry.

This spring, three of Dan and Mary's MST members, along with two others from Grace Covenant Church in Harrisonburg, Va., traveled to visit Dan and Mary in their context in Albania. It was a fantastic opportunity!

We found that visiting the ministry in-person provided such insight into their reality—meeting people we had heard about, walking through the town—which changed our perspective and provided encouragement to continue engaging in our support roles on the MST as true partners in the ministry assignment.

God directed the team as we prayed for individuals in the town of Milot and the cities of Lezhë and Shkodër. We were each impacted by worshiping



Judy Hiatt (right) prays for Milot, Albania, the town where VMissions workers Dan and Mary Hess serve. MST members were impacted by their experience in Albania and encouraged in the ways they support Dan and Mary. Courtesy of Pam Lehman

with the children and adults in Milot on Sunday and then participating in praise and prayer services on Monday through Thursday.

A personal highlight was when our team walked up the hillside to get fresh water and spent time praying over the city of Milot. One of our team members sensed the Holy Spirit saying that the work in Milot would see a season of change from plowing and planting to one of growth. The drinking water at the spring reminded us of the living water that is available to the people of Milot, Jesus Christ.

God placed a call on our hearts during the trip to pray for Milot and intercede for God to bring transformation to that place and multiply the gospel throughout Albania and the region through a renewed church passionate for the gospel of salvation. We prayed for every aspect of Dan and Mary's ministry there and the impact they have had and will have.

We returned home energized and committed to partnering in God's work through Dan and Mary Hess. In this way we participate in the Great Commission, which includes the chief end of humankind, to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

We encourage others serving on an MST, or others who pray for and give financially to workers, to consider traveling to their worker's ministry location. We found the complete picture so captivating and helpful to pray with knowledge and experience and carry the vision of what the Lord will do.

*Pam Lehman serves with her husband Gerald on the Ministry Support Team of Dan and Mary Hess, serving in Milot, Albania.*

# Call to Prayer: Sowing Seeds in the Dust

BY SARAH SCHOENHALS

**I**t's a lot easier to pray when we're buoyed by seeing tangible results! And yet, so often, the results we seek are not immediate, nor the kind of results we imagined.

The good news of Jesus has been proclaimed in Thailand for nearly 200 years. Many gospel seeds have been sown. Many prayers have been prayed. Many lives have been poured out for the sake of the gospel in this nation. And at present, less than 1% of the population are followers of Jesus. In Isaan, the northeast region of Thailand where we serve, it is estimated that only 0.2% of the population is Christian. So when I pray for Isaan, though I have *hope*, it is often easy to have pretty low *expectations* for the results.



VMMissions worker Steve Horst led the prayer team and LEC members in worship, including singing “How Great Thou Art” in Thai and English simultaneously.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Schoenhals

Last fall, a prayer and vision team from VMMissions, Eastern Mennonite Missions, and the Philippines joined us in Isaan for about a week. As we prayed online together leading up to this trip, one person shared a devotional on the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 17: “Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (James 5:17-18 NIV).

The devotional writer observed, “This implies that the farmers were willing to sow seeds in the dust while there was no rain, believing that one day the rain would come.” (Lectio 365, October 18, 2022). This image encouraged the prayer team to press on, through prayer, even when tangible results aren't yet clear, believing that God will still produce a crop in his way and time.

Once the team was on-site in Isaan, we had opportunities to pray together with Life Enrichment Church (LEC), with whom our family serves. Encouraged by teaching from Michael Hershey on listening in prayer, we took time to be quiet and listen to God before heading out for some on-location prayer times with LEC.

After quietly listening, we shared the words, images and feelings the Lord brought to mind. One LEC leader shared a mental picture that emerged for him, of dry fields where things began to grow. During a prayer drive one of the missionary kids similarly shared the idea that came to her mind: rain pouring down on dry ground to make seeds grow—and the rain was God's love. Neither the LEC leader nor the missionary child had been a part of the team's previous prayer time, nor did they know about the dry ground image that had so impressed us. God was speaking the same thing to different ones of us!

As we returned from one of our prayer drives with LEC, God again surprised us when it began to rain...during a time of year when there is usually no rain, and a rainbow appeared.

I resonate with the conclusion of the devotional writer: “Prayer sometimes can feel like this—as if I'm sowing seeds in the dust. Physically, it feels as if nothing is happening, but in fact that's not the case spiritually. I want to have seeds in the ground when the rain comes.” We give thanks for the work God is doing in Isaan, both seen and unseen. Join us in persevering in prayer for God's kingdom to come, God's will to be done, in Isaan—and whatever places the Lord lays on your heart—as it is in heaven.

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*Sarah Schoenhals serves with her husband Mark and two daughters among the Isaan people in Det Udom, Thailand, in partnership with EMM.*





The sun sets over Kate's village in Central Asia

Courtesy photo

## Worker Profile: **Kate Miller\***

**Service program:** tranSend  
**Serving since:** 2022

### **Assignment:**

I am a computer programmer for a U.S. company that is partnered with a company in Central Asia as business for transformation (B4T). My company asked me if I would consider moving and working with the office in Central Asia to help strengthen the relationship between the two companies. I immediately said yes. I've always dreamed of living in a Muslim country, and I am grateful for the way that everything so effortlessly fell into place for me to go. I currently live with a local family and am working in a computer programming business in a nearby city. My year-and-a-half commitment ends at the end of this year, and I am still praying about what my life will look like after that.

### **Biggest challenge:**

Challenges have changed as I've lived here longer, but one of the most consistent challenges is learning to live without much of a believing community. It's been an adjustment moving from the States, where I am surrounded by believing family, friends, and a church. Here there are only a handful of believers, and they don't speak my native language. There is something very surreal and eye-opening about living with a Muslim family and seeing them live out their convictions. My prayer is that, as I live everyday life with them, I can show them Jesus and share with them about what I believe (as my language level allows).

### **Biggest joy:**

To build off of my biggest challenge, one of the biggest joys is seeing people count the cost, take a stand, and accept Jesus. There are only a few believers in the village that I live in, but the ones who have accepted Jesus as their Savior are so hungry to learn and grow in their faith. It has been so impactful to hear them share testimonies of how Jesus showed up in a dream, or how they happened to get ahold of a Bible and couldn't stop reading it. This has been such a big faith-builder in my life. Jesus is moving and working in the Muslim world, and I am so grateful that I get to have a front seat view of it.

### **A typical day:**

In the mornings, I have language lessons for two hours with a local language helper. After that I go to the programming office, where I work until about 5:30. There are currently about forty Central Asian programmers at the office, along with one of my teammates and I. Working at the office has been such a good way to get to know people. I am extremely blessed with how warm and welcoming they have been to me. After work, I head back home and spend most evenings there with my host family. Because I am a single girl living in a village in Central Asia, most of my social life is done during the day or in the neighborhood. It's hot during the summer, so after the sun goes down we will sit outside, talk to neighbors, and eat sunflower seeds. It's a great time for me to get to know people, practice my language, and get the latest on the neighborhood gossip.

\* Name changed for security



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