

Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Fall 2023
VOLUME 9 • ISSUE 3

The Mission Imagination



IN THIS ISSUE: NEW IDEAS & EXPRESSIONS
EMERGING IN MISSION



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

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



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 **VMissions**

From the President

The Mission Imagination

BY AARON M. KAUFFMAN

“Behold, I am making all things new.” Revelation 21:5 (NASB)

The Christian movement has been innovating from the very beginning. As Ted Esler reminds us in his book, *The Innovation Crisis*, schools, modern science, hospitals and human rights all arose from the efforts of Christians to live out a biblical worldview.



Yet such innovation goes beyond mere human imagination. In the book of Acts, we see how the movement Jesus launched quickly moves beyond Jerusalem and begins to incorporate people from different languages, ethnicities and religious backgrounds. The Holy Spirit takes the church places it never thought possible – or even desirable. Mission imagination is Spirit imagination.

How is the Holy Spirit continuing to lead us into new horizons in mission today? I'll name just two.

First, the “receivers” of mission have become the senders. According to the World Christian Database, 66% of Christians today live in the places that had the fewest Christians a century ago – Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania. The mission movement is not far behind. Nearly half (47%) of the missionaries serving cross-culturally today come from these continents. The Majority World is becoming the majority mission force.

How is VM Missions responding? By leveraging our resources to get behind what God is doing. Almost 30% of the workers we support come from the Majority World. A growing edge for us is cultivating sustainable financial support for these global workers. In some cases, we match giving from their sending communities with funds from North American partners. In other cases, we prioritize bi-vocational ministry, helping workers find jobs in the marketplace or engage in business development to generate revenue for ministry. We continue to learn.

Second, the mission field has come home. Pew Research Center reports that the percentage of Americans calling themselves Christians has fallen to 65%, while those identifying as atheist or agnostic is up to 26%. This is particularly true among young adults, less than half of whom would say they are Christians (49%).

In an increasingly secular context, what does mission look like? One step we are taking is to invest in renewal. The Soil and The Seed Project, led by Seth Crissman, is helping families in over 20 denominations across 30 states to engage scripture in fresh ways through music and “little liturgies” accessible to kids and grownups alike. Alternatively, the SLAQ (Servant Leader Quest) program, led by Ken Wettig, focuses on a few to reach the many by discipling a dozen teenagers annually through adventure, service and intergenerational “crucial conversations.” The vision is that mission will emerge from the renewed faith of the next generation.

Innovation in mission opens up new possibilities and creates new challenges. Yet we believe the future is secure for a church that keeps in step with the Holy Spirit's lead.

Cover: The Soil and The Seed Project represents a new expression of mission combining ancient spiritual practices with new and exciting music, art, scripture, and liturgies. See article on page 4.

Photo courtesy of Seth Crissman

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Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/22 to 08/31/23

Special Projects \$2,163,728	Special Projects \$2,181,519
Mission Fund \$994,651	Mission Fund \$1,065,094
Income Total \$3,158,379	Expenses Total \$3,246,613

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

Transforming

Editor: Jon Trotter

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Mission Training Center Dedicated at Open House



VMissions hosted an open house and dedication for the newly-renovated Mission Training Center (known affectionately as “The Barn”) on October 12. Friends of VMissions and community members came out to see it and enjoyed fellowship over a meal, including a number of folks who had worked on the restoration. President Aaron Kauffman shared a word of thanks to supporters and those who labored to make the space beautiful and ready for service in dedication to God’s mission.

VMissions is grateful for the prayers and financial support of our partners in God’s mission, which made this project possible, particularly through the Church of Many Cultures Campaign, which raised \$3M for global church planting, business for transformation, and the Mission Training Center restoration.



VMissions is Hiring for Two Part-time Positions

Virginia Mennonite Missions is seeking candidates for:

An Events and Publicity Coordinator at up to 60% time. This individual will plan and facilitate effective promotional, fundraising, and recruiting events that reach the entire VMissions constituency. In addition, he or she will assist in the publicity of VMissions’ work through a variety of media outlets. Qualified applicants should demonstrate a passion for the gospel, an active commitment to the church, and skills in event planning, communication, and technology.

An Office Assistant at up to 50% time. This individual will welcome guests, answer phones, and work with the Executive Assistant to ensure the smooth daily operations in our office. Qualified applicants should demonstrate a passion for the gospel, an active commitment to the church, and have gifts of hospitality, verbal communication, and basic computer skills.

If an applicant desires full-time employment, these roles may be combined. Both positions include hourly compensation, and positions over half-time offer additional benefits. See full descriptions and links to apply at vmmissions.org/now-hiring/

Hannah Guisewite Resigns as Events and Publicity Coordinator



Hannah Guisewite resigned from VMissions staff on October 13. “I am deeply grateful for the warm welcome I received from the entire team. Your unwavering support enabled me to excel in my role while also encouraging me to discern God’s calling for my future,” she writes.

Two Workers Appointed for Service in Central Asia

Joy* (name changed) has been appointed to join the VMissions launch team in Central Asia as a tranSend intern, working half-time as a teacher at an international school in the capital city and the other half engaging in language learning and connecting with the launch team.

Elaine* (name changed) has been appointed to serve on the Central Asia launch team and teach half-time at an international school. Her teammate Joy is her spiritual mentor, accountability partner, and friend, and they look forward to serving together.

Worker Reappointments



Seth and Theresa Crissman, serving with the faith formation ministry The Soil and The Seed Project, based in Harrisonburg, Va.



Juan José Lagos, serving as a church planter and pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo, Winston-Salem, N.C.



Hannah Shultz, serving in ministry to children and families through discipleship and music, Harrisonburg, Va.

David and Marta* (names changed), serving on a multicultural business for transformation team in Central Asia, where they are engaged in language and culture study.

**Persons serving in a sensitive location. For security reasons they are not pictured.*

New Expressions of Ancient Practices



A new expression of mission combines old spiritual practices with the fresh beauty and breath of the Holy Spirit.

BY SETH CRISSMAN



This fall, there was a week when I had a long conversation in which my optometrist helped me *and* I helped out a friend with a stovetop skillet. Seem unrelated? Let me explain.

Back in August, I needed to order some new contacts, so I called and made an appointment. During my contact exam, I told the doctor what brand I used so I could order enough for the next few years. She kindly explained to me that the contacts that I was using were already obsolete when she was in medical school, and that was 10 years ago.

As someone who is oddly loyal to strange things like contact and dish soap brands, I explained to her that I had always used that brand of contacts and they worked great for me. Why should I change now? She explained to me that I was lucky they didn't damage my eyes and that she could not, in good conscience, prescribe that specific contact for me to use: they were made of far inferior material. I reluctantly relented and tried what she recommended. I could tell immediately they were much, much better than my old ones.

Later that week, we were visiting friends. I was cooking lunch and needed a big skillet. They only had a small one because both of their brand new, large non-stick skillets had their coating scorched and ruined by their beautiful new stove. This time I knew the solution: switch to cast iron. I knew from experience and explained why any old well-seasoned cast iron skillet would do.

I think that part of why The Soil and The Seed Project has been successful and connected deeply and broadly, is because it both reaches back (like the skillet) by incorporating spiritual practices as old as the church, and does so through music, art and little liturgies that are new and fresh and exciting—

catching the fresh breath of the Holy Spirit (like the contacts). Forming faith in Jesus Christ through prayer, art, music, scripture and spiritual practices is as old as the church itself, but everything about the project feels new and beautiful. My favorite new expressions of the church hold both together.

I remember the first time I saw a kid on a balance bike. They must have been 3 or 4 years old. They were wearing a helmet and absolutely flying around the parking lot, but there were no pedals on the bike, let alone any training wheels. My whole life, I thought the best way to teach a child how to ride a bike was using training wheels: it's what everyone did. And yet, here I was encountering something new, something quite different than what I thought was the best way to learn. And frankly, it looked more natural and way more fun.

If we are going to dream with God so that we can follow the Holy Spirit's leading and join in God's work in the world, we need to approach life and the world around us with open hands, ready to learn from God and others in ordinary moments (and not just when we're sitting in a church pew or a Sunday school class). We enter into the life of Christian discipleship as learners first, called to follow Jesus. If we can maintain an ongoing posture of learning,

The Walking Roots Band (of which the author is a member) performs at the Sing Me High Music Festival in Harrisonburg in August 2023. Photo by SMH/Rachel Holderman





Musical contributors to The Soil and The Seed Project perform at a concert fundraiser on October 14, 2022, at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Photo courtesy of Seth Crissman

it can help us to let go of some preconceived ideas about what the best way to be “sent” and joining in God’s work in the world looks like. We can then follow Jesus and join in God’s work in the world in new and beautiful ways.

I think that part of why The Soil and The Seed Project has been successful is because it both reaches back by incorporating spiritual practices as old as the church, and does so in ways that are new and fresh and exciting.

best comes into focus, we move. Listening to God and others helps orient how we understand our work and sparks our imagination.

VMissions has been a perfect incubator for our work. Their commitment to provide flexible support for outside the box ideas like The Soil and The Seed Project is a gift to the church and an example of faithfulness. I could not be more grateful. New ministries like ours are a ton of work and impossible without a team of people working together with a massive community of partners (individuals and churches) who want to join in what God is doing.

Because of the individuals, families and congregations that have partnered with us, we have been able to give away 10,000+ copies of the project to folks in 20+ different denominations across 30+

states. The music from the project has been downloaded or streamed by people on six continents in more than 90 countries. God has done more than we could have imagined.

Rapid growth has required us to work hard, plan diligently and pray imaginatively. I spent 6 weeks in early 2023 writing a grant proposal to increase our capacity to do this work through additional funding. VMissions supportively and generously submitted the proposal on behalf of The Soil and The Seed Project. In June we found out the endowment chose less than 20% of the 400 organizations/ministries that applied, and we had been chosen! God provided, and it is a game changer.

A lot of folks have asked me if the grant covers all of the funding needs for the project. The answer is no. The grant doesn’t replace any of our previous need for support from financial partners. We will need to fundraise about the same amount as we have each of the last two years (about \$100,000 every year) to be able to do this work. The grant’s funding will, however, enable us to create new opportunities to gather people together as individuals, church leaders, parents, caregivers, and communities. We will continue doing what we’ve always done: nurture and cultivate faith in Jesus as together we turn towards Jesus and believe the good news. We’re excited, because this is God’s work.

Seth Crissman is Project Director for The Soil and The Seed Project, based in the Shenandoah Valley. He is married to Theresa Peachey Crissman, and they have four children. To support the Project and the Crissmans, visit: thesoilandtheseedproject.org/support or scan the code.



Reimagining Our Mission

In Shkodër, Albania, the approach of meeting one-on-one opens doors for sharing the gospel and for multiplication.



BY SOLANGE TARTARI



Growing in ministry is about experimenting and adapting as you go. We can't create a formula, because almost everything we do depends on culture and context. It's

through mistakes and successes in the process of ministry that we learn most. We have to be willing to change our approach as we learn from our host context.

I've always believed that investing time in sharing with others about how God has transformed your life is the best way to impact their lives. Deep things within people's hearts can only be addressed when they are brought into the light. Especially within a cultural context of "honor and shame," people are able to be more open in one-on-one settings in a way they would not have the courage to do in a group setting. One-on-one discipleship provides the opportunity to focus on personal challenges and reach hearts, through God's word and your prayers for them.

We try to build an appropriate and participatory approach in our cultural context by always remembering to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to our host culture. For example, in the Albanian context, inviting someone to have coffee is both appropriate and effective. It can produce good results, opening doors for preaching the gospel. So if each person who is spiritually mature manages to reach one more life in this way, multiplication begins.

The goal is that the one who receives the gospel message matures to the point of sharing that faith with others. This can create a huge change in a community in the long run. Furthermore, one-on-one discipleship allows you to adapt the dialogue according to the spiritual maturity of each person or the situation someone is going through.

We can see positive results from this approach. Sometimes, changes and transitions can have a very negative impact on our lives in the short term. However, if we consider a long-term approach to ministry, these same transitions and changes can be positively powerful and eye-opening!

It has been two years since we went through a transition on the mission field that directly influenced both our family, and our ministry. This change was forced upon us by the pandemic, and since it happened very quickly, it was not planned out well. Looking back, however, I realize that everything happened because it was time to move forward and overcome some of the challenges in our lives, beginning in our own home.

The goal is that the one who receives the gospel message matures to the point of sharing that faith with others.

Just prior to our sudden transition, we had discovered that our son Paulo has the learning disorder dyslexia. "What now?" we thought. We live in a country without any resources in this area. I took it upon myself to learn about dyslexia to try to help him. Paulo gradually reinvented himself and tried to find methods to overcome this obstacle in his life.

With our unexpected ministry transition, he also now had to change schools, make new friends and find a new support network of teachers who understood his difficulties. What a time of adaptation we went through! It required of us an incredible amount of resilience. Through these difficult experiences, I was intentional about discipleship with my son. My goal was to reach his heart and understand his emotions. He often cried, which would provide the opportunity to pray together for the difficult situations he was going through. The Lord was at work and providing means of engaging his emotions and overcoming challenges.



Paulo Tartari, the author's son, writes down Bible verses he is studying as part of his Christian discipleship. This process, during a series of difficult experiences, helped him to engage his emotions and overcome challenges. Photo by Solange Tartari

Paulo is now 12 years old. He has a lot of new friends. At his new school, the teachers are much more flexible in helping him. He has a heart to serve God in the church; he helps with the media during church services on Sunday and assists the Sunday school teachers with younger children. His traumatic experiences have been transformed into a testimony!

Our main resource for spreading the gospel is people, but it is the Spirit who is at work in the lives of those we engage with the gospel. All we can do is be clear about our role and purpose in God's reconciling work in the world. It all begins with knowing God's salvation, peace and reconciliation in our hearts. It then takes root in our homes and families, and eventually extends to our church, community and network of influence.

We are serving in Shkodër today because of the testimony we saw in the lives of the young Albanian couple who invited us to work here. We saw in them a burning desire to serve people with the unconditional love of Christ. Pastor Gusti and his wife Visa had been in the process of planting the church "Guri i Themelit de Shkodër" for some time when we joined them here. There was still a lot of work to be done to solidify the church's ministries and become legally registered with the government. We accepted their invitation and together we have worked towards these goals. The legal registration part of the church was completed in less than three months. The Lord is working through the church's various ministries and that work is beginning to bear fruit.

One of the ways God has been working is that soon after we moved to this city, the church also moved to a larger but much more challenging location, in a Muslim neighborhood. The church building does not look like a traditional church. It's just a three-story house with a commercial space on the street level. On the first day, we placed a small sign with the name of the church out front. One of our new neighbors noticed the sign and us moving things in. Soon, he came over and asked, "What are you going to do there?" We told him that this building would now serve as a church. He took the opportunity to remind us that we were in a Muslim neighborhood. We asked him, "Are you good or bad Muslims?" He replied, "Good ones, of course!" So we responded that we are also good people and are here to bless his community.

We don't have ongoing problems with our neighbors regarding the building. That is in part because in our Albanian Muslim cultural context, a church is only considered a church if it is a building designed and constructed for that purpose. From our biblical perspective of course, it's the community that gathers together in Jesus' name that makes a church the church.

After their first year in Shkodër, Gusti and Visa had to go through some challenges as they pursued their pastoral calling. Because we had a similar experience, the Lord gave us the opportunity to be part of their support network. We were able to help them in an intentional way.

We are very happy to witness everything that God has done and will continue to do if we do not give up on the journey in the midst of ministry challenges. When Christ lives in people in the midst of the struggles, it can provide hope for others who face similar challenges. More broadly, we are always thinking about how to hold the short-term and long-term perspectives together. This helps us to remember that regardless of our presence, God's work of multiplication will continue through the native Albanian disciples we are making through our intentional one-on-one relationships.

Solange Tartari works to multiply disciples, leaders, and faith communities with her husband Rafael in Shkodër, Albania, in partnership with the Evangelical Mennonite Alliance of Brazil.

A Long-term Vision of Renewal

In his internship with SLAQ, Devin is learning and growing in ways he could not have imagined, just as the program itself carries a vision for the younger generation to impact the world.

BY DEVIN STIPE



In Christian missions there is often this big focus on sending and going. People are sent across the country, across national borders, and across seas. The idea is that they go, and either reach a new people

group or go to a people who have not yet accepted Christ. I love this. I love that God has put such a bold and adventurous spirit into his people to go and do these hard things, that there are believers who are willing to lay down their life in order to give spiritual life to another. Thanks be to God.

That said, however, what I really appreciate about the SLAQ (Servant Leader Quest) program is that instead of going out to make as many new disciples as possible, SLAQ takes a handful of youth who already have a relationship with Christ, and provides an opportunity for them to become particularly strong disciples. In the same way that Christ would go from place to place, inviting the multitudes to follow him, he also had twelve disciples who he would teach more privately and intentionally. Both are good and both are needed. Both are of Christ. SLAQ is like Jesus teaching the twelve disciples.

The interesting thing about SLAQ to me is that I don't expect to physically see a fruitful harvest from it. So much of the vision for SLAQ is exactly that: a vision or a dream. And that vision extends beyond my internship. It extends years and even decades into the future. The vision is for the younger generation to be fully alive for the good of our community. It's a vision of a small group of servant leaders going out into the world to be little Christs. It's a vision that lasts a lifetime. In SLAQ, I see my role

as that of a gardener who waters a plant for a short while and then prays to God to give the increase and an abundant harvest to feed many people.

At the same time, I am growing and being watered by others. I am nurtured foremost by God, and by SLAQ leader Ken Wettig and my VMissions coach Martin Rhodes. I appreciate the ways that SLAQ is positioning me to do things that I wouldn't do otherwise. I'm assigned to things that challenge me and teach me. I learn what I'm good at and what I'm not so good at. For example, working with kids was not something that I'd claim to be good at. I never would have chosen that for myself. But God has chosen it for me at this time, to teach me and grow me as his servant. While I wouldn't say that I'm necessarily good at it, I *do* enjoy it, and it's opened my imagination to future ministry opportunities that I never would have even considered without encouragement from my coaches at VMissions, and this tranSend internship with SLAQ.

I'm excited to see what good comes from the communities that SLAQ youth will get involved in. I can only imagine that luke-warm brothers and sisters will have their spiritual fire rekindled by the Christ-like leadership of those who participated in SLAQ. In my own college campus ministry, I see the wonderful, powerful effect that a community leader can have in bringing people together. This is someone who directs others to a well of living water like a sign in a desert.

When the vision is for servant leaders to live and share abundant life in Jesus, I can only plant seeds and water them for a short time. But I am praying and expecting that the Lord will bring a plentiful harvest through this program.

Devin Stipe is a tranSend intern serving in partnership with Coracle as a SLAQ servant leader and is exploring ministry at Early Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Partnerships Enhance Jail Ministries

BY SKIP TOBIN



My mornings are marked by some very clear priorities. I feed my chickens and survey my garden. It is love that draws me to the garden. Do the peppers need more water?

Are there suckers that need to be removed from the tomatoes? Are the beet seedlings going to make it this time? Is the kale up yet? What new things are happening to which I should be attentive?

In the same way, as the Ministry Coach for USA workers, I am always asking myself: *God, are you doing something new that I need to notice and support?* The answer is yes. My eyes have been opened to God's movement within our local prison and to the energy and dedication of many servants of God throughout our community who are faithfully on mission with God on behalf of the incarcerated.

I was surprised last month when more than 20 leaders showed up for Chaplain Baker Rigg's jail partners meeting. During the introductions we heard from Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Mennonites, and more—all of whom conduct regular ministry in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Regional Jail. Some have memories of visiting the old jail building which has been gone for 25 years!

These volunteers were very grateful when VMissions helped facilitate the placement of Jason Wagner as prison chaplain in 2017. When Jason transitioned to a role at a larger prison, there was great concern for his replacement: Could God provide another gifted chaplain to serve in this field that they knew so well was ready for harvest?

I began to meet with this group and we began to pray together, something that as far as I know had never been done before. God has answered our prayers in providing Baker Rigg, who has begun serving in a half-time role as a VMissions worker. At that partners meeting, I watched folks lean forward eagerly to catch every word as Baker described the growing desperation for God which he is observing among the inmates as he shares the

gospel. We heard from some of the volunteers that they too are also noticing the same desperation. Baker described what he sees every Sunday night as different local church groups lead packed out services. He reported on his efforts to train new volunteers to meet the jail's protocols. He shared how he is unable to keep up with the inmate requests that are stacking up to see him week by week.

The part of the hour-long meeting that was most special was our prayer time. It seemed as though our corporate requests were held together and lifted up to heaven, as men and women, energized by Jesus' own words, asked the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field. With one voice we also asked the Lord to provide for Baker's financial needs so that his service could increase to full-time.



Baker Rigg. VMissions photo

This sense that the Spirit wants to heal and empower those who are incarcerated is still increasing. We have a vivid example in VMissions worker Nathan Carr. At this partners meeting, he boldly shared his story of how as an inmate six years ago he had met the resurrected Lord. He shared how the former VMissions jail chaplain Jason Wagner had walked with him from the shame and loneliness of incarceration into a new kind of life and community! Nathan told of others who have been recently baptized in prison. Nathan's dream of opening a recovery house is taking shape!

This is a relatively new field for us at VMissions. We are being invited to take our place among partners. We have the privilege of supporting what God is doing across denominational lines as we pray together and work in a field that is not far away but at our very doorsteps. Here are people who are ready to be found, and who once found, will not keep quiet! What beautiful things are growing in this particular garden!

Skip Tobin is the VMissions Ministry Coach for USA mission workers.

Call to Prayer: Renewal Starts With Prayer

BY DAVID STUTZMAN

Zuversicht is a German word that means firm trust or confidence in something good to come. It was the theme chosen for the latest prayer month project and a theme that lies at the center of what we believe about this project: Renewal starts with prayer.

INEO Netzwerk, a resourcing ministry for the Mennonite church in Germany, has hosted and organized a yearly prayer month for three years now. The idea was born out of the disruptions of COVID. A small group met online Thursday mornings to reflect on the church and to pray together. After months of praying together, we came to the conclusion that we should do more of this and with more people. The idea of organizing a prayer month came into being.

We invited people to write devotions for a daily devotional and hosted weekly online gatherings for sharing and prayer during the month of February. The reception was very positive and we have continued hosting it each year, inviting more people to participate, to write, and to lead the online gatherings.

There is something about prayer, as a church, that helps us see the spiritual landscape around us and bring into words God's movement among us.

I have often felt like I am not a particularly spiritual person. I often struggle taking the time for prayer and reflection in my own spiritual walk. Yet, the more I work in mission, the more I recognize my dependency on God and the more I have gravitated to participating in spiritual practices with others. Over the past three years, I have spent more time in prayer than I have in the previous twenty.

The prayer month, while part of my work with INEO, has been personally exciting and meaningful, because it has felt like one of the more encouraging things we have done with others. There is something about prayer, as a church, that helps us see the spiritual landscape around us and bring into words God's movement among us.



The *Zuversicht* resource “Impulses for a Month of Prayer” from this past February. Courtesy of David Stutzman

INEO over the years has functioned as a think tank for new projects, some that stick and some that don't. Renewal work can be elusive and hard, especially in a context that seems to beget despair, helplessness and resignation, when it comes to the future of the church. We try to encourage new initiatives for mission and renewal and work in encouraging pioneers and teaching discipleship.

The focus on prayer was a new focus, a meaningful one. We came to a deep realization of the dependency we have on God and the need for prayer to ground our hope and faith. Courage, perseverance and hope are all part of renewal and not things that can be particularly fostered well merely with good ideas, strategy, or more energy.

We don't know the impact the prayer month will have. We know that the gatherings have been meaningful for the scores of people that have participated and for many, many more who have used the devotional for personal prayer time or in small groups. I have come to have *zuversicht*, that if we pray to God, follow after Jesus, and look for the Spirit at work, that is how good things begin.

David Stutzman is a church planter and networker along with his wife Rebekka in Mannheim, Germany, in partnership with the South German Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Mission Network.



After classroom study, YWAM students will put their learning into action in South Asia. Courtesy photo

Worker Profile: **Adam & Elise Sauder***

Service program: tranSend
Serving since: 2023

Assignment:

We serve with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Myrtle Beach in South Carolina. One of our local ministries is an after-school program for children in an underprivileged section of the city, where we also do some food distribution. Another local ministry is reaching out to some of the many international students that come to Myrtle Beach to work in the tourist industries during the summer. We've partnered with a local church in running cafe nights, and orientations to working in the city, which has been a great way of beginning relationships with these students.

We are also helping to staff the six-month discipleship schools. This is a program for young adults which includes a "classroom" phase for deepening their relationship with God and learning about God's heart for people of every nation, which is followed by an "outreach" phase to South Asia, to put into practice what they've learned in a cross cultural setting.

Biggest challenge:

One of our biggest challenges is the time commitment of staffing the discipleship schools. It's a huge privilege getting to pour into the students for these five and half months, though it can be pretty tiring with the amount of time in the week we put into it. We are really leaning on God in this season for extra grace and perseverance, and are praying that God will work powerfully through this school to bring students into a deeper relationship and give them his heart for the lost.

Biggest joy:

Our biggest joy in this season is seeing the discipleship school students growing in their relationship with God. The school this year is just beginning, but already we've been encouraged to see how God has been giving students new revelations of how God is a good Father and loves them unconditionally. This year we have nine students in multiple generations, and it's amazing to see the students connecting so well with each other already. We are excited for all that God will do during the rest of our time in Myrtle Beach, and during outreach together in South Asia.

A typical day:

Our days usually look very different depending on what season we are in. Currently we begin the day with personal devotions in the morning, and then we have a time of prayer and worship together. Then we have our lectures for the students in which we have a different guest speaker every week to teach a different topic of discipleship. The rest of the day is finishing lectures, and depending on the day it would be small groups, one-on-one discipleship, practical work projects around the ministry house, or local outreach.

* Names changed for security



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