

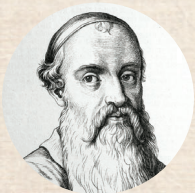
Transforming

Stories of making disciples in the way of Christ

Winter 2025
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Five Centuries of Anabaptist Mission



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From the President

Three Defining Traits of Anabaptist Mission

BY AARON M. KAUFFMAN



Five hundred years after its founding, Anabaptism is still going strong. What started as a renewal movement among Swiss reformers in 1525 is now a worldwide family of two million believers in 80 countries.

From the beginning, Anabaptism was a missionary movement. Converts saw the Great Commission as central to their baptismal vows, and shared their faith boldly, often at great personal cost. In response to intense persecution, quietism came to characterize succeeding generations. But the 1850s saw a resurgence of Anabaptist missional fervor. A truly global Anabaptism today is a direct result.

What is an Anabaptist approach to mission? Over 25 years ago, Wilbert Shenk, long-time mission practitioner and professor, summed it up in “ten defining themes.”¹ Here’s my take on Shenk’s summary, transposed to a trinitarian key.

- 1. Mission starts with God.** In Shenk’s words, “God is shown to be a missionary God: the one who initiates, comes to the world seeking and wooing, calling and restoring” (p. 5) We don’t own mission, nor does its success depend wholly on us. That should infuse our missionary endeavors with tremendous humility and free us from a preoccupation with results. Yet it should also instill us with confidence, since we know that one day, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14, NRSV).
- 2. Mission looks like Jesus.** To quote Shenk again, “God’s missionary intention for the world is entrusted to Messiah, the one called Suffering Servant” (p. 6). That means the measure of our missionary work is the character and example of Jesus, who “became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). We not only ask, “What would Jesus do?” We assess our efforts based on what Jesus actually did. He is both the model and the message. As his apprentices, we heed and extend his call, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mark 1:17).
- 3. Mission follows the Spirit.** The early church did not launch as a worldwide movement immediately after the resurrection. It waited upon the Holy Spirit, who, as Shenk says, “released into the body the power and grace of Jesus the Messiah” (p. 14). We dare not rely on merely human efforts and strategies. We depend on the Holy Spirit, and that means prayer and patience are essential to our work. Yet we know the ends of the earth are the eventual destination, for as God promised through the prophet Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17).

Mission starts with God, looks like Jesus and follows the Spirit. This is not merely an “Anabaptist” approach to mission. It’s one all Christians would do well to consider.

¹ “Forging a Theology of Mission from an Anabaptist Perspective,” Mission Insight, Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Board of Missions, 2000.

Cover images: Clockwise from top left: *The Seven Acts of Mercy - Ministering to Prisoners*, painting by Michael Sweerts, 1649 (Public domain); Tent meeting with evangelist J. Otis Yoder, Richmond, Virginia, 1948 (Eugene Souder photo); Isaan members of Life Enrichment Church visit a community for gospel outreach in Thailand, 2023 (Courtesy of Bethany Tobin); Mennonite mission in Mount Hermon, West Virginia, ca. 1940s (Grace Showalter collection, courtesy of Elwood Yoder).

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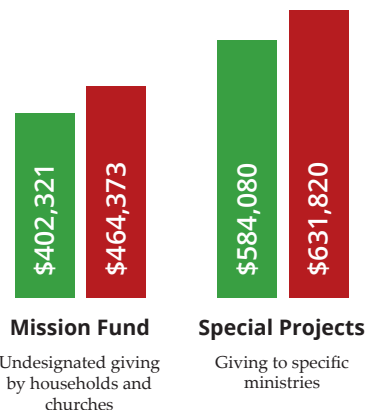
BY JAMAICAN AND ITALIAN MENNONITES

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Financial Report

Reporting: 09/01/24 to 01/31/25

- Income: \$986,401 (total)
- Expenses: \$1,096,193 (total)



Transforming

Editor: Jon Trotter

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Join the mini-golf fun on Saturday, May 17 for our annual Putt For Missions event at Mulligan's Golf Center, Harrisonburg, Va. Families and small groups are invited to support the work of equipping, sending, and supporting workers at home and around the world. The round begins at 9:00 am, followed by refreshments and a short program. Afterwards, the fun and fellowship will continue with a special youth tournament. Make a hole-in-one for a good cause! In case of rain, the event will be May 24.

LEARN MORE



MOTORCYCLE FOR MISSIONS

Spend the weekend of June 6-7 riding through the Blue Ridge mountains, making new friends, and helping VMissions share new life in Jesus at home and around the world! This annual ride is a great way to hit the road and support mission while enjoying camaraderie and fellowship. In case of rain, the ride will be June 13-14.

LEARN MORE



SLAQ Becomes a Ministry of VMissions

SLAQ (Servant Leader Quest) is a program that raises up cohorts of youth as serving leaders in the way of Jesus through adventure and discipleship.



Ken Wettig

Based in Harrisonburg, Va., and led by director Ken Wettig, the program became a partnership of VMissions and Coracle for several years. Coracle, a nonprofit based in Arlington, Virginia, that focuses on spiritual direction and retreats, discontinued its leadership of the program in February 2025. On March 1, SLAQ will become a ministry of VMissions, with the hope of becoming a standalone nonprofit organization.



Cookout and Open House Planned for April 16

VMissions is one of over 100 organizations in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County that participates in the Great Community Give, an annual online giving day to support local nonprofits and their contributions to the community.

As in prior years, VMissions will host a cookout and open house at the Mission Training Center (Barn) on April 16, 2025. Members of the community are invited to enjoy free food and fellowship between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm.

Workers Recently Appointed for Service

Priska DiGennaro, Partners in Mission intern at Viva Youth in Bogotá, Colombia, for six months.

Aaron Evans*, tranSend intern on the Launch Team in Central Asia and working as a software programmer.

Bradley Goodman*, tranSend intern on the Launch Team in Central Asia and exploring a longer-term assignment.

Maegan Knight, tranSend intern at an Every Nation church plant in Panama City, Panama.

Carlin & Chass Kreider (Arden, Jaron, Riah, Tyrus, Zeya), tranSend interns in training and study in Panama followed by service in campus ministry and church planting in Cusco, Peru.

Elliot Rhodes, tranSend intern in discipleship and language training in Costa Rica, followed by service with Viva Youth in Bogotá, Colombia.

Michael Santana*, long-term worker serving on a ministry team in a slum in Southeast Asia.

Carl Strite, marketplace ministry through his business, Strite's Donuts, and engaging in itinerant evangelism and discipleship.

Worker Reappointments

Mike & Risha Metzler, church planters at Mosaic of Grace, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 11/2024 to 10/2025.

Adam & Elise Sauder*, assignment transition to long-term ministry in South Asia, 01/2025 to 07/2025.

Randall Schlabach, pornography recovery ministry to men in Wayne and Holmes counties, Ohio, 11/2024 to 10/2026.

Ken Wettig, director of the SLAQ program, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 3/2025 to 2/2026.

* Names changed for security

Two-Fold Gospel Witness

Early Anabaptists embodied Jesus' call to love their enemies and be willing to suffer for their faith.

BY JASON RHODES SHOWALTER



In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull to the Christian world. In it he gave spiritual authority to Catholic European powers to kill or enslave Muslim and indigenous populations

in the territories they discovered, seizing the possessions and land of these “enemies of Christ” for their own profit.¹ The principle in this document, later known as the Doctrine of Discovery, formed the legal and theological foundation for the subjugation of native populations of the New World and the enslavement and exportation of peoples from the African continent.

The historical backdrop of the papal declaration was the centuries-long rule of Muslims in Spain to the west and the advance of Ottoman armies from the east. In the early decades of the 16th century, the threats to Catholic power came not only from invading armies but also from within. As the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe, Anabaptist reformers in both Catholic and Protestant-controlled areas called for a visible church marked by spiritual regeneration through faith in Christ, a reality Menno Simons called “birth from above” or “the second birth”².

Though not rejecting participation in a universal church as evidenced by their nearly universal use of the Apostles’ Creed³ and appeals to apostolic teaching, Anabaptists saw the local church as the community of daily discipleship that incarnationally embodied that larger identity. For these Christians, voluntary baptism apart from state control was the entry into this mutually-accountable community of those who had received God’s redemption through Christ and walked out daily love for brothers and sisters. But most shocking in light of the imminent threat of foreign armies was their call to love even enemies.

Three years after leaving a Benedictine monastery because of his growing understanding of scripture and evangelical conviction, Michael Sattler was tried in May 1527 on nine charges related to his Anabaptist faith. To the charge that he discouraged all believers from violent resistance to the Turkish armies he replied, “If the Turks should make an invasion, they should not be resisted, for it is written: Thou shalt not kill. We are not to defend ourselves against the Turks and our persecutors; but earnestly entreat God in our prayers that he would repel and withstand them.”⁴



Michael Sattler preaches in the woods. Painting by Mike Atnip (Public Domain).

Schleitheim Confession written by Michael Sattler. Felix Manz becomes first Anabaptist martyr.

Menno Simons, former Catholic priest, joins the Anabaptist movement. His leadership organizes and focuses the movement.

Mennonites migrate to the Netherlands and northern Germany for relative tolerance and economic opportunities.

Germantown, Pa., founded by 13 German Mennonite families; first permanent Mennonite settlement in America.

Many Anabaptists migrate to North America to escape persecution and economic hardship.

1525

1534-1535

1540s-1550s

1663

1693

1760s

1527

1536

1600s

1683

1700s

Anabaptist movement begins in Zurich, Switzerland, with first adult baptisms of Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Georg Blaurock.

Münster Rebellion led by radical Anabaptists ends in a violent siege and the execution of its leaders. This event tarnishes the Anabaptist reputation; persecution increases.

Severe persecution of Anabaptists across Europe drives many to flee to more tolerant regions, such as Moravia (Czech Republic), where they establish communal settlements.

First Mennonites migrate to North America, settling in Pennsylvania, which offers religious freedom under William Penn’s leadership.

Followers of Jakob Amman (known as Amish) split from Mennonites over issues of church practice.

Hutterites, an Anabaptist group in Moravia, flee persecution by migrating to Romania and later to Ukraine.



Portrait of Menno Simons from *The Complete Works of Menno Simons*, 1871. Public Domain.

For this witness, Sattler’s tongue was cut out and he was tortured horribly before his body was burned as a heretic. As he fell into the fire, “he admonished the people, the judges and the mayor to repent and be converted. Then he prayed, ‘Almighty, eternal God, because I have not been shown to be in error, I will, with thy help, to this day testify

to the truth and seal it with my blood.”⁵ Margaret Sattler, also convicted for her faith, was sentenced to a “third baptism” of death by drowning.

In 1535, Anabaptists violently overthrew government authorities at Münster, carrying out apocalyptic visions of a new Jerusalem. Though the events at Münster were an exception that proved the rule of Anabaptists’ commitment to suffering love, authorities across Europe used the events to increase persecution of the group. Menno Simons, whose church community was just seven miles from Münster, regretted not speaking out more forcefully against violence. He later clearly tied Christian rebirth and discipleship to suffering love. “The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife. They are children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning forks.”⁶

An emphasis on God’s love was a motivating factor in Anabaptists’ commitment to sharing the gospel. “As nonresistance was love’s negative expression, missions became its positive affirmation.”⁷ And

because faith came from a voluntary response to the proclamation of the gospel, Anabaptists rejected the use of violence because “the Christian’s weapons are spiritual, against the fortifications of the devil.”⁸ A prominent Hutterite missionary, Claus Felbinger, wrote in 1560, “[W]e do not go only into this land, but into all lands...where He sends us and will use us, there we go, in obedience to his divine will, regardless of what we must suffer and endure.”⁹

The Schleithem Confession, affirmed by a gathering of Anabaptists in 1527, notes the objection raised by many Christians of that day and the present: “Now it will be asked by many who do not recognize (this as) the will of Christ for us, whether a Christian may or should employ the sword against the wicked for the defense and protection of the good, or for the sake of love. Our reply is unanimously as follows: Christ teaches and commands us to learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart and so shall we find rest to our souls.”

“Where He sends us and will use us, there we go.”

Claus Felbinger,
Hutterite missionary

We do well to consider the invitation of the two-fold witness of early Anabaptists who put the spiritual and physical welfare of enemies before their own lives and also made the costly case to fellow Christians that the suffering of the cross is Jesus’ call to all believers.

Jason Rhodes Showalter is Global Ministries Director for VM Missions.

1 <https://bit.ly/40KDOyl>, Feb. 4, 2025. 6 <https://bit.ly/3WSvjQH>, Feb. 4, 2025.
2 Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 185. 7 Estep, 193.
3 *Ibid.*, 181. 8 *Schleithem Confession* (2 Cor. 10:4)
4 *Ibid.*, 46. 9 Estep, 194.
5 *Ibid.*, 47.

Hutterites migrate from Ukraine to Russia, where they are granted religious freedom and military exemption.	First group of Russian Mennonites arrives in Manitoba, establishing farming communities.	Russian Revolution and subsequent persecution drive many Anabaptists to North America and Latin America.	Anabaptist groups, including Mennonites and Amish, experience growth and expansion in North America.	Global Mennonite population over 2 million, highest in Africa and Asia.
1817-1820	1874	1917-1920s	1950s-1970s	2015
Due to changes in Russian policies, many Anabaptists migrate to the U.S. and Canada.	Some Mennonites migrate to Latin America, especially Paraguay and Mexico, seeking land and religious freedom.	During and after World War II, many Mennonites from Europe and the Soviet Union migrate to North and South America to escape war and oppression.	Anabaptist communities are found worldwide, with growing populations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.	Anabaptists commemorate 500 years guided by Christ-centered community, witness, and peace.

Authentic Disciples on Mission

A bold, irrepressible witness characterized both the Early Church and the early Anabaptist movement.

BY LINFORD STUTZMAN



Janet and Linford Stutzman aboard their vessel *SailingActs* in the Mediterranean. Courtesy of sailingacts.com

Following spring. He had baptized about 3,000 persons during the year between his own baptism and death. Thirty-two Anabaptists, including two women who were considered “more stubborn than the men,” were martyred in Munich in the next few years.

In 1980, Josef, a teenager from a small Catholic village outside of Munich, met Leon Miller who was serving with Youth Evangelism Service (YES) with Eastern Mennonite Missions in our little congregation in Munich. At the time, Josef was a rebel against pretty much everything—the church, the government, education, and social expectations. Leon met Josef on the streets of Munich where he was busking. Leon, who had done some of his own busking, struck up a conversation and a relationship and eventually introduced Josef to the Jesus he had never known.

Josef was fascinated and attracted and, still the rebel, began to follow Jesus. His life changed. He decided to be baptized. Knowing that his family and probably the whole village were opposed to such a radical decision (“You already are baptized!”), I suggested a discrete location such as in a church baptistry. In preparation, I told him stories about the early Anabaptists, and how, about 450 years earlier, Leonard Dorfbrunner came to Munich and baptized four people who were killed shortly thereafter, some perhaps drowned in the Isar River.

In 1527, Leonhard Dorfbrunner, an Anabaptist evangelist, spent several days in Munich, Germany. During that time he baptized four Catholics in the Isar River that runs through the middle of the city. Dorfbrunner left Munich, but was apprehended in Passau shortly thereafter, and was martyred the

“That’s where I want to be baptized,” Josef insisted.

Now there is a park along the Isar River today, a popular place, when it’s warm, for sunbathing on the grassy banks of the river—a very public place. Baptism in the same river that an early Anabaptist had been drowned in! Baptism in a public park! Baptism to which he would invite his family who were in solid opposition! He had been baptized in his little village in Bavaria as an infant, in the local Catholic church, to which almost everyone in the village belonged and everyone would know the scandal.

That is where I baptized Josef—in the deathly cold waters of the Isar, in front of our little congregation, Josef’s family scowling from the sidelines, and curious, bemused strangers looking on. Witnessing, as had others 450 years earlier, anabaptism.

Shortly thereafter, Josef declared himself a conscientious objector and refused to serve as required in the German military. He applied for the option of doing alternative service and was approved. Josef’s life changed radically. He was a true Anabaptist.

It occurred to me on the day of Josef’s baptism, that I was not an Anabaptist in the same way Josef was. I was a Mennonite baptizing an Anabaptist.

Back in Bavaria, his family and village, watching Josef’s life change, changed themselves from disappointment to admiration.

Josef later would join the Mennonite Church, graduate from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., marry a Mennonite, and serve in Germany as an evangelist with YES. He would then return to the U.S. and join the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, where he was ordained to start a new congregation in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. West End Fellowship was planted in a part of the city that was home to marginalized of all kinds, including homeless and/or persons with addictions. Several years ago, after Josef’s congregation started other new churches, he was ordained as a bishop to give leadership to this small network of churches



Josef Berthold (left) with Linford Stutzman on the island of Patmos, Greece, in June 2024. Josef and his wife spent a week sailing and learning with the Stutzmans aboard *SailingActs*. Photo: Janet Stutzman.

engaged in mission on the margins of church society.

I have learned so much from Josef about being Anabaptist, especially in mission and evangelism. In reading Acts, observing early Anabaptists, and reading their own amazing explanations of their bold, irrepressible witness, I have been struck by the similarities of the early stages of these two revolutionary and effective movements.

Like Jesus, both the early church and the early Anabaptists fearlessly, prophetically, and persuasively shared the good news of the Kingdom. They did so in a dangerous environment, under threat of severe persecution, and even death.

They defied religious and political authority and even the pressure of their disappointed peers with whom they shared many of the same grievances about the oppression at the hand of those authorities, but who chose to fight for change rather than suffer for it. Their suffering, persecution, expulsion, and martyrdom all were seen as representing Jesus and as such made a powerful impact on individuals and eventually all of society.

They were authentic. Their message and their lives proclaimed the same publicly verifiable gospel. Men, women, and children participated fully for they saw themselves as having the authority to speak the truth to power, which they did with enthusiasm. They exercised the power of the good news of Jesus and the transforming power of the Spirit and rejected the power of self-defense and coercion.

They were nomads of the Kingdom, often leaving the security of fields, family, and homes. Their mission activities were often an experimental enterprise of learning through doing, rather than strategic planning.

In both the early church and the early Anabaptist movement, apostles emerged and God's kingdom spread explosively and often chaotically. But disagreements and fracturing were inevitable. While unity was always something for which they worked, they did not cease to invite people to join who might potentially challenge the unity of the community.

This year, we Mennonites are celebrating the 500-year anniversary of the Anabaptist Movement that began in Zurich. Those of us who will go to Zurich to the celebration will hear about Felix Manz, and his own "final baptism" in the Limmat River that runs through Zurich. We will sing, pray, and remember. That will be wonderful! But as Mennonites in North America celebrate with Mennonites from around the world, we recognize that many of them are more Anabaptist than we are!

No matter where we're from, we can choose, like the early followers of Jesus in the Roman Empire, or the early Anabaptists in the Holy Roman Empire, to reignite these traits and become authentic Anabaptists again.

Linford Stutzman is professor emeritus of culture and missions at Eastern Mennonite University and a former mission worker in Germany and Australia.

The Anabaptist Mission Flame

BY ELWOOD YODER



Twenty-five years ago, Amy Rush had an idea to serve pancakes to hungry college students on Sunday mornings. Her friends rallied to help, they offered invitations, and the Zion congregation supported the idea. Soon the students came to eat pancakes, by the carloads, sometimes fifty or more. Some were intrigued by a rural country church with a great mountain view nine miles from Eastern Mennonite University. Then they caught on to monthly potlucks and they heard good preaching. On a recent Sunday, fifteen students came for worship and communion, with no pancakes or potluck on the church schedule.

Recently I discovered that my ancestors joined the Anabaptist movement in the 1660s. They had been invited to adopt Anabaptist faith by neighbors. Hans and Catharina Joder (later Yoder) received believers' baptism, and joined the Anabaptist-Mennonites. The flame of Anabaptism spread rapidly from neighbor to neighbor. But persecution pushed most Mennonites out of Switzerland.

The Anabaptist mission impulse sparked anew in the late 1800s in the Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC). In 1887, Minister and Conference Moderator Joseph N. Driver and three men rode their horses to a high mountain point between Virginia and West Virginia. Joseph's heart burned with evangelistic zeal at the prospect of preaching the gospel in the hamlets and valleys of West Virginia. Ministers and lay leaders rode horseback in extensive circuits in what came to be called "schoolhouse evangelism." Out of that zeal, Virginia Mennonite Board of Mission and Charities (today, VMissions) was born in 1919.

In the first half of the century, hundreds of Mennonite young adults caught the mission enthusiasm. Nellie Coffman traipsed up and down the mountains of West Virginia to witness to families and children of her faith in Jesus. Anna B. Showalter, from Broadway, Va., served in the mountains of West Virginia, teaching children during the

heyday of the summer Bible school era. Anna also gave ten prime years of her life to the Mennonite mission in Knoxville, Tenn., the first church planted by VMissions.

By the mid-twentieth century, Virginia Conference Mennonites utilized summer Bible school as a means of outreach. In at least eleven churches, the Bible school program included African American children. But this ran head-long into southern white resistance. Teaching mixed classes of black and white children in Bible school and Sunday school brought criticism. A strong mission impulse carried the day, though, and integrated classes were offered in spite of glacially slow progress toward racial integration in the South.

A forthcoming 2025 history book about VMC includes the mission growth and spread of churches far beyond Virginia. Three mission churches emerged in Florida, two vibrant congregations thrived in Hickory, N.C., another in Georgia, and two in Ohio. The missional impulse was strong in southeastern Virginia, such that by 1972 the Warwick and Norfolk Districts had a combined nine congregations. Beyond U.S. borders, Mennonites started mission churches in Italy, Jamaica, and Trinidad, and later elsewhere around the world.

Today, the mission flame of the early Anabaptists is still very much alive. VMissions continues to send people to live and share the good news of Jesus, locally and around the world. I am particularly encouraged by the gospel zeal of young adults who serve and are exploring life on mission.

Elwood Yoder is an historian, author, and retired history and Bible teacher from Broadway, Va.



Having grown up in VMC, Caleb and Stephanie Schrock-Hurst are preparing to serve in Taiwan as workers with VMissions and Mennonite Mission Network.

Photo courtesy of Elwood Yoder

What Does Anabaptism Mean to You?

VM Missions global church partners in Jamaica and Italy describe the enduring impact of Anabaptism.



Jamaica Mennonite Church

Est. 1955

“For me, Anabaptism is pursuing a life that reflects the teachings and example of Jesus. It is a faith that emphasizes discipleship, community, peace, and justice. This tradition challenges me to live counter-culturally, prioritize God’s kingdom over worldly values, and follow Jesus in every aspect of life.”



Elder Millicent Peart
Good Tidings Mennonite Church

“To be an Anabaptist means that I am a part of the world’s mission of peace and I actively play a part in sharing Christ’s message of peace.”



Sister Avia Aiken-Brown
JMC Youth President

“Anabaptism has motivated us. We feel encouraged and energized to continue to disciple and share Christ with whoever we have the opportunity to minister to.”



Deaconess Valrie McCarthy
Unity in Christ Mennonite Church

“At age 13, I will never forget the sense of family I felt as a newcomer when my mom and I began attending Temple Hall Mennonite Church. We were taught the Word of God and introduced to church history and the Anabaptist story. We were given opportunities to engage in evangelism, and we shared the gospel on buses and city centres. I give God thanks for my wonderful church family and the various opportunities I have had to engage in outreach and evangelism.”

Deaconess Marsha Norman
Temple Hall Mennonite Church



Italian Mennonite Church

Est. 1949

“Even today, Anabaptism, with its history, its truths, and its radical reforms and deeply lived faith, continues to be a glimmer of truth in a world that settles for half-truths or lies that silence its own conscience. In a world where every difference is flattened and where the search for God is emptied, it is difficult for healthy churches to practice the fundamental principles of Anabaptism. But by the grace of God, these truths still resonate in the present time.

Believer’s baptism, in contrast to the practice of infant baptism, emphasizes and practices that baptism must be a conscious choice made by adults. In an era where religious belonging is often taken for granted from the moment one is born, Anabaptism reminds us of the importance of a personal and conscious choice.

Anabaptists today face a reality where religious conflicts and political interference in religious life (and vice versa) cause some religions to sacrifice certain truths and orders of God on the altar of money. It is necessary to reaffirm the need for a clear distinction between the religious and political spheres, a separation between church and state.

We are called to express the will of God that calls humanity to mutual respect and love. The refusal of any form of violence and participation in armed conflicts is a strong sign and principle in an era marked by conflicts and violence. Radical pacifism testifies that God’s work in the hearts of people can enable peace towards every people and culture.

The most challenging aspect today for Anabaptists is to present and teach that a true Christian must take Christ as a model; they must emulate him in their daily lives. This produces a strong testimony and translates into a simple, honest life of service to others.”



Pastor Pino Arena
Shalom Mennonite Church

Call to Prayer: Praying Through Suffering

BY ANNE (NAME CHANGED)

Around 8:15 in the morning, members of our Launch Team leave their houses and take a short walk to our building, where they climb the four flights of stairs to our teammate's apartment. There we gather to pray, usually with the help of a scripture or song. Fifteen minutes later, we disperse to continue our days, most of us heading to language lessons.

I didn't join in on this prayer gathering for the first few months, even though I had to walk down just one flight of stairs. It's too early. I like to have a longer morning with tea and pajamas. I'd rather intercede alone. Yet I believe that God loves to be with his people, and God chooses to work in response to our prayers.

We can share the gospel, hand out tracts, have lots of seminars and meetings—but unless the Lord moves, the church will not be built.

Our calling to do church planting among this South Asian Muslim people is primarily a spiritual thing. This people group is 200 million people. We estimate that for every 25,000 Muslims in this people group there is just one believer. With our own manpower and budgets, how can we even dent that? We can share the gospel, hand out tracts, have lots of seminars and meetings—but unless the Lord moves, the church will not be built. So this year I am joining in. I am committing to more corporate prayer and individual prayer.

From our living room veranda, I look down over the neighborhood mosque. Especially on Friday, the crowd for the noon prayers fills up the multi-storied mosque, the yard, the parking lot, the road – even swarming around the corner into our building's garage. Exiting and entering our building is impossible during these prayers. We are literally pinned in by prayer mats. For me, this becomes a visual reminder that it will take a prayer movement to woo an (Islamic) prayer movement—to contend with a prayer movement. Islam is such a socially strong force here, that our tiny efforts alone by human power won't change this; we have to focus more on prayer.



One of the things we have prayed about recently is a group of persecuted believers ten hours away. This group of believers is not organizationally connected with us, but we know some of them through youth conferences.

Persecution here ebbs and flows. This time it might have been sparked by something on social media, news of people coming to faith, or a disgruntled former believer. We don't really know. Maybe the antagonist Muslims thought that by threats and mobs and beatings, the new believers would return to Islam and the old ones would be silenced. We'd like to encourage these believers in-person, but our foreign presence with them would only increase persecution, as they are being accused of converting for foreign money.

But we can pray! We can pray like the believers did in Acts 2:30, that believers would be full of boldness and that God would send his healing power with miraculous signs and wonders. Even though these believers likely don't even know the word Anabaptist, I am sure that in heart they have a lot in common with the early Anabaptists who suffered boldly for the sake of Christ. I take courage thinking of all the persecution that the early Anabaptists faced. The church was not defeated back then: persecution can help us turn to God for spiritual strength, it can take us to our knees to pray.

Can I invite you to pray for these South Asian brothers and sisters, too?

Anne serves among an unreached people group in South Asia with her husband James (names changed) and three children with Pioneers and VMMissions.



Worker Profile: **Jorge and Ginny Enciso** **Matilde, Maia, Matthias, Martín**

Service program:
transForm

Serving since: 2024

Assignment:

We serve with VMissions in Bogotá, Colombia, overseeing a nonprofit called Viva Youth, which is dedicated to supporting at-risk youth and fostering a network of pilgrim churches that has now expanded into Venezuela. Ginny directs the Resource Center where youth who have exited government state care receive holistic care in meeting physical, emotional and spiritual needs as they transition to adulthood. Jorge works on church planting efforts which include strategizing, traveling, and making new connections. We have a full and busy life with four kids and we love serving as a family.

Biggest challenge:

One of our biggest challenges in the Resource Center is the daily decisions that require a lot of discernment on how best to help each individual with their unique needs. For this reason, it is essential to have a strong team with different perspectives and wisdom. Do we receive a youth who just got out of jail? How do we help a young man struggling with health issues and homelessness, or a young woman who repeatedly covers up the truth and is vulnerable to sex trafficking? What is she really trying to tell us? The weight of walking with youth who are struggling must also be borne by a team, taking care of each other as we take care of those who walk through our doors. There are thousands of youth in this situation, and yet we touch only a few every day. We fight on, trusting that kingdom work is about the long-term and being faithful, that God will bring the growth.

Biggest joy:

We love seeing how God is patient with each of us, and being reminded of God's grace and love for us. "N" started asking questions about faith after four years of being with us, coming most days to the Resource Center. He has traveled with us to serve in children's programs in remote areas. We've seen his ups and downs. This December, he let go of the hurt he was carrying towards his family and moved toward forgiving them. He now shows up to tell me the latest Bible story he read, or how he prayed for the first time out in the desert. His growing faith is real and matches his personality and character.

A typical day:

We take an hour bus ride or a 45 minute taxi ride through the crowded Bogotá streets to the Resource Center for at-risk youth. Ginny takes the morning to do math, reading and spelling with our 2nd and 7th grader, while our 10th grader works independently. We have lunch with the other youth, staff and volunteers who are there for the day. We spend the afternoon connecting with youth—listening to stories, playing together, and problem solving on how to meet their practical needs. We often host a variety of people at home in the evenings or visit friends for house church gatherings. And sometimes we come home to rest and spend time as a family.



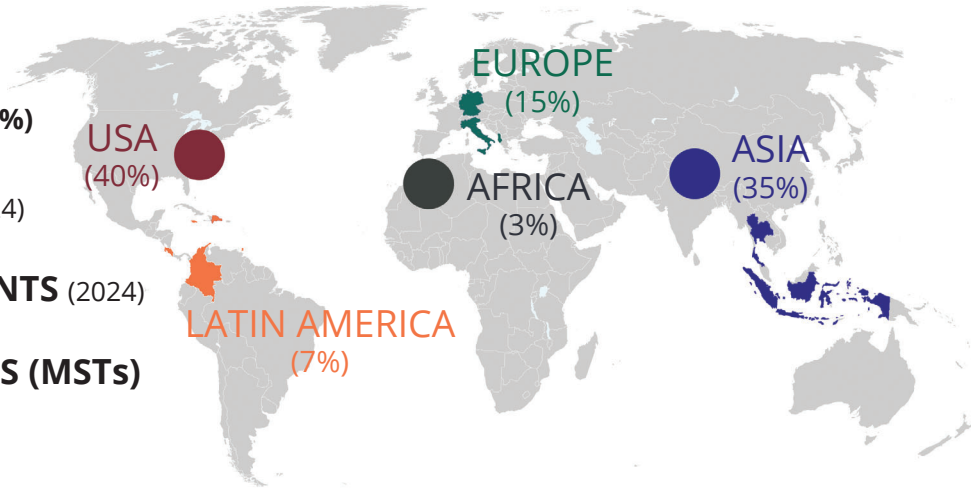
VM MISSIONS ANNUAL UPDATE

105 YEARS OF
SHARING NEW LIFE
IN JESUS CHRIST

CURRENT STATISTICS

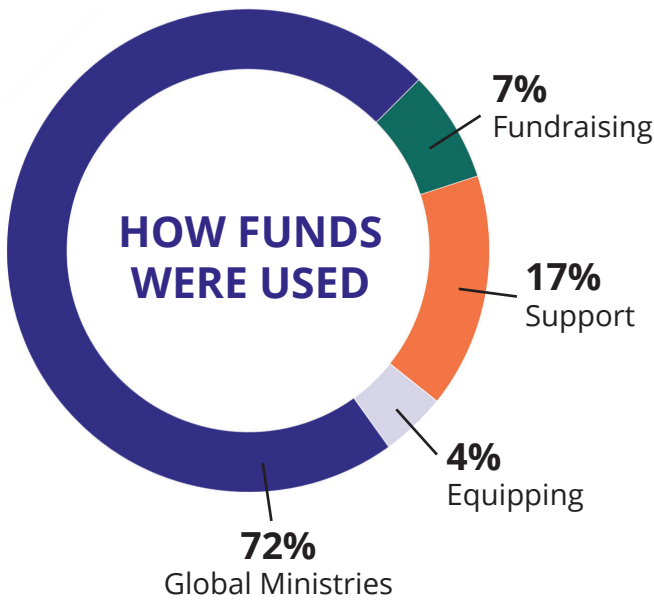
- 68 TOTAL WORKERS**
 - 29 SERVING 5+ YEARS (43%)
 - 24 NON-U.S. BACKGROUND (34%)
 - 29 SERVING UPGs* (43%)
- 22 NEW WORKERS** (SINCE 01/2024)
- 16 TRANSEND INTERNS**
- 84 E³ COLLECTIVE PARTICIPANTS** (2024)
- 13 COUNTRIES OF SERVICE**
- 18 MINISTRY SUPPORT TEAMS (MSTs)**
- 63 MST MEMBERS**
- 14 STAFF**
- 13 BOARD MEMBERS**

WORKERS BY REGION



Statistics current as of February 21, 2025

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW IN FISCAL YEAR 2024 (SEPT. 1, 2023 - AUG. 31, 2024)



REVENUE	
CASH DONATIONS	\$2.3M
OTHER	\$1.9M

EXPENSES	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2.9M

TWO-YEAR COMPARISON

CATEGORY	2023	2024
CASH DONATIONS	\$2,548,760	\$2,347,761
OTHER REVENUE	\$1,006,873	\$1,991,688
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,555,633	\$4,339,449
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,637,342	\$2,949,505
TOTAL ASSETS	\$10,497,038	\$11,886,982

* Unreached People Groups, defined as less than or equal to 5% Christian AND less than or equal to 2% evangelical.

Workers and staff at the VM Missions worker retreat in July 2024 at Highland Retreat, Bergton, Virginia.



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