**Virginia Mennonite Missions**



**Strategic Planning Process – 2012-13**

**QUESTIONS FOR DELEGATES**

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| 1. | **What mission resourcing is so valuable to you as a congregation that you would be willing to double your contributions to VMMissions if we would provide it?**   * Resource to connect with persons in our local community (parish) * Resource to assist us in providing space/assistance to the immigrant community * Resource to provide for an internship/community worker to make connections /bridge cultures * Make Perspectives class available to every congregation. * Have Skip and Carol come to every congregation - (up-in-out) * Increase personal connections, reciprocal relationships, resourcing * When members of the congregation serve as mission workers, the congregation essentially doubles contributions. * *Connections* magazine-way of staying in touch * Placement of individuals both in short/long term assignments. Sending of the personnel. * VMM expertise in doing mission/resource to help congregation discern appropriate mission activities * However, we are concerned that we feel we are already doubled contribution through focused funding/MRT of individuals * Trained, professional group leaders for * Staff available for missional consultation * Skip Tobin’s job is really valuable. How can we get him (or his type of missional sponsorship skills) throughout the conference for * Fraternal guests—not for a weekend, but for 6 months or a year. Mutual transformation. * What are the resources? * Openness to workers for tranSend that aren’t Swiss/German EMU grads—OCP Farms * Help congregations learn how to reach out in their neighborhoods * Help develop strategies for local congregations * Peacebuilding * Outreach in community with training for individuals; e.g.—the work Skip is doing? * Engaging in resourcing for Global Missions. Develop it further in our neighborhood, immigrants in our city. * Energize youth and young adults for missions and ministry * Solve world hunger * If there was a model in place to train indigenous/native workers that could serve more effectively in their own environment. * Workshops in practical evangelism: to areas where a community has its feelings about our “Mennonite” church, where its own hurdle in the community. * Teach us trust, rely, and defend. * Help us not to rely on evangelists but to evangelize. |
| 2. | **Do the priorities of “least reached” and “least of these” provide a useful filter for determining the footprint and locations of ministry? What other filters would be helpful?**   * Be more efficient with more authentic, accountable church planting. Possibly more efficient in more local focus rather than real distant * Concern with sending to far reaches with no authentic outcome * More “least of these” than “least reached”—too often programs focusing on “least reached” has shallow theology. * We believe VMM does best at “least of these,” so focus on that. * Like least reached but how is it funded? * Who determines the definition of “least reached”? * Where is the process of discernment present in this? * Are there elements of the “least” language indicative of a type of missional “arrogance” by assuming a “most of” mentality? * Shall we “adopt” an unreached people group? * Are we not growing because we don’t have a target in our USA ministries? * What is our current filter? How does this compare with “least reached" and “least of these”? * One filter: the concentric circles of Acts 1:8 * Being able to hit the doors of opportunity (can’t plan this). * Both lenses seem important to us. However, because “least” implies that we have the “most” or an exclusively one-way transmission in a mission relationship, we’re searching for better language for a lens. * Is “mutual learning and transformation” helpful language? * Can VMM simply respond to the vision/passions that emerge in our conference? * Will this mission relationship empower both parties for mutual gospel transformation? * Where are local churches naturally fitting? * Define mission and ministry; decide on geographic area. * Filter: Openness to hearing Anabaptist perspective; openness to Jesus oriented life * Put your resources into the most fertile mission field? * Or do we look for people for the least reached such as Albania? * We need to go with those people who have a passion for mission and ministry. We can’t put these in a box of “least reached” or “least of these.” * Yes. Lots of overlap in those. Prioritizing global urban slums for building churches and sustainability. Also reaching spiritually and materially least in our localities. Reaching across divides of race and class-Hispanic, African-American * Traumatized veterans? Looking at most wounded in our localities. * Incarnational in ……….. * Follow the leading of the Spirit * Don’t narrow our vision * Who do you mean by least reached?! * Seems limiting--might miss opportunities * Is a better filter where God/Holy Spirit is leading/calling. * “Least reached”--Do we really need to reach out to “exotic” places? * In the past, we have sent people where we have connections of people. * We have spread out from Italy as a starting point, following relationships. * Our group would encourage natural directions, including oral relationships. * “Least of these” might not sell well. * “Least of these“ are plentiful among us locally. * They are helpful, but they’re very difficult to place workers in those areas. They’re closed and don’t want Westerners. * Other filters: Creative access, approaches beyond evangelist/missionaries. * Watch where migrations are going. * Call and direction of God and Holy Spirit Proverbs 3:5, 6 |
| 3. | **As we look to create sustainable ministry models for the future, would a bi-vocational approach appeal to you or others in your congregation? What other approaches might you suggest?**   * Create a type of MST for folks in the church that reach out to others in the local community. * Bi-vocational model has possibilities for singles but could be challenging for families * No. Unless it is a site that fits with the worker’s role or that the job has synergy with why they are sent. * How might work-as-mission play into this? * How might bi-vocation partnerships be helpful? * Churches overseas “take off” when the locals (who are likely bi-vocational) step into primary leadership. * Bi-vocational is unavoidable in our US churches. * Should VMM staff be bi-vocational? * Bi-vocational pastor--only way to work at ministry at the Eastside for now or in small churches * Importance of engaging in the community to spread the gospel. * ½ salary on a full-time pastorate. You do not pay for what they have done but for what they have been called to do. * Continue to explore this one * Yes, with a variety of other options * Seems like an efficient model especially for nurses, teachers. Sometimes time constraints affect ministry. Motives for ministry purer in bi-vocational. * What/How will bi-vocational assignments be perceived for young people with no work experience? * The call of God is Key. * Yes. But must address issues of healthcare, student debt, training, etc. * Yes, in societies especially where missionaries as such are prohibited. * To save money or to be effective in ministry? * What does incarnational ministry look like among poor, in less-developed countries? * Consult Alban Institute’s new article on ministry support * Creating culture of call and equipping for our congregations and institutions. * Bi-vocational is the wave of the future….need to explore those possibilities. * Need the whole community to be engaged in ministry, not just pastors. * Personal relationships at home lead to more giving * Can work * Train people for “English as a foreign language” * Wouldn’t work in developing countries * Can’t walk away from this model; group named a few people they already knew doing this. * Yes, especially for training that can benefit the culture they are living in * Bees * Yes, I see this as a must!! * Also allow for faith missionaries who go in faith trusting God to provide. “Take no purse.” * Home Missions, too! * Probably not real practical for the “foreign” fields. For “closed” countries this could be an opportunity. |
| 4. | **What are the current factors that limit greater diversity of age, gender and ethnicity among board, staff and workers? How might we better overcome them?**   * College debt has biggest impact, e.g. person of color may have more college debt and cannot go, (We realize this may be a stereotype) * Whether they can attend board meeting * Many are Swiss/German backgrounds * Qualifications/Many or some aren’t qualified * Having workers raise own support may be limiting some who may be even better qualified. * Perhaps interest in missions and qualifications should supersede diversity * Board level—need wisdom * Network has limits—how do we expand networks * Economics—Young persons not in a place to serve * Why diversity?! * How to tap into Boomer Generation or retired persons who would be open to serving? * Geographical distance for meetings * Gender is probably not as much of an issue * Location of office—outside of local location—move to DC * ? Difference in understanding of missions among age groups * Need some experience just to be effective (include both and wisdom!!) * ? History of missions among Hispanic congregations, other than with the local community * Need to pay higher salaries |
| 5. | **Should VMMissions deliberately seek additional supporting partners who would have an affinity for an Anabaptist approach to mission? Why or why not?**   * Yes. It’s good to hear about why others are drawn to Anabaptist ideology. The church is changed by conversations/insights of others. * If the supporting partners committed to Anabaptist core values * Yes, but Anabaptist perspective needs to be the litmus test so, as long as they are clearly Anabaptist thinking. * Yes! * Certainly! * Yes. We are moving to more commonality with other church constituencies but Anabaptist vision has spread significantly in other church constituencies also. * An affinity for an Anabaptist approach to mission is very important. Our group encourages this. * Lean toward collaborating with like-minded Christians. * Perhaps building on some natural connections * Yes, we affirm broadening relationships—accountability; some kind of reporting necessary. * Someone had a problem that others didn’t actually live by their doctrine of faith as Mennonites. These missionaries didn’t follow their doctrine. (There was divorce, for example) * We are so diverse as Mennonites and Anabaptists that others could contribute a lot. They may need more preparation and caution to explore compatibility. Explore ownership and protocols with eyes wide open. * Difference between partnerships with individuals as opposed to the Anabaptist groups that don’t have their own agency (Dayton Menn.) * Assoc. of Menn. Evangelical Congregations Brethren * May be a way to build bridges (genius of MCC) * Need to work outside our denominational box * We would support this |
| 6. | **What gifts does the global church have to offer us that we have not yet received?**   * Would we consider hiring locals in respective locations instead of having people from the U.S. in charge at regions here in the U.S.? * Use of native/indigenous workers would help us be more effective and at less expense. * Global church opens our eyes to the broader kingdom of God. * Shows us how the Kingdom transcends cultural differences. * Has a lot to teach us about relationships. Many may be much closer to original life during reformation. * A sense of authentic faith in midst of persecution * Relationships, a sense of family * Requiring a new/different sense of honesty (holding back for sake of relationship) * Care for and honoring of elders * A truer sense of faith, one where people truly depend on God’s providence. Actually looking for God’s spirit among them. Also thankful with less. * Generosity, freely giving/sharing one with another. * A keen desire for worship; eager. |
| 7. | **How can VMM help your congregation engage for mission in your local community? What else would you like to tell us as we consider the future of VMMissions?**   * Trained, professional group leaders for * Staff available for missional consultation |

*Compiled from table discussions at Feb. 2013 Winter Delegate Session*