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