



# EXTENDING BEYOND

## Farewell and blessings to my successor

Church leaders and Mission Network Southeast Asia tour members outside the GKMI Sola Gratia church offices in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, August 2018. Photo by Victoria Christine.

A message from Stanley W. Green



Leaving is always bitter-sweet. Even if it is a decision for good reasons, I find no consolation in stepping away from a job that I have loved and felt privileged to be engaged in for almost three decades.

During those years, I had the honor of visiting with you in your office, at home, or in a restaurant (once in a combine and another time on a fishing boat!). With some of you, I traveled to see God at work where Mennonite Mission Network is engaged. Through all these opportunities, I treasured the deepening of our relationship. In getting to know you better, I was moved and inspired by your commitment to God's mission of bringing healing and hope around the world. I was often heartened by your generous sharing that helped advance that vision. I derived so much joy from

*Continued on the back page.*

The Mennonite Mission Network board of directors announced on Apr. 21 the appointment of Michael J. Sherrill, PhD, as the organization's new executive director. Dr. Sherrill is an ordained minister, educator, scholar, administrator, and leader with 25 years of global experience. Dr. Sherrill has been the director of Asia and Middle East for Mission Network since 2017.



Dr. Sherrill assumed the executive director role upon the retirement of Stanley W. Green on July 31. Green had served as the agency's first leader since its formation in 2002.

"We believe Mike will continue creative and careful leadership for Mennonite Mission Network, and we look forward to what God will do in the years to come," said Mission Network board chair and search committee member Madeline Maldonado.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

—Matthew 28:19



Photo by Josh Garber

A Christmas market in Barcelona.



Alisha Garber leads worship during a virtual church service in May. Photo by Josh Garber.



Josh Garber leads an online gathering as a way to reach out to the youth in their church during COVID-19. Photo by Alisha Garber.

# A calling to mission in Europe

By Zachary Headings

**A**lisha and Joshua Garber, with their son, Asher, have served for the past three years in Barcelona, Catalonia (a region where allegiance to Spain vies with voices calling for independence). Before that time, they served for four years in Lithuania. During their service, they've spent much time dispelling myths about their mission work in Europe.

In Europe, mission work doesn't look like what many people typically envision – projects that address important physical needs such as building wells or constructing church buildings. The mission work that the Garbers feel called to help address is spiritual poverty. They recognize a void in the hearts of people in Barcelona that is yearning to be filled by the love of Jesus Christ.

There is a colonial mindset that prevents some from seeing the whole of the world — including the Western world — as a mission field. While common, this is a flawed understanding. Here is what Jesus said on the subject, from Matthew 28:19.

“As you go, make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

All places. All around the world, there are people that yearn for the good news of Christ. But despite this teaching, North Americans rarely consider places like Europe to be on their missional radar because of a deeply ingrained colonial mindset that has permeated mission work for centuries.

When thinking about mission work, many envision countries that have low income and GDP (gross domestic product). This mindset of “from the west to the rest” stems from centuries of colonialist ideals that have encompassed mission work since Pope Alexander VI issued the papal bull *Inter Caetera* in 1493. Spain and Portugal (and later, other countries) used this devastating decree to justify the colonization, conversion, and enslavement of people in Africa and the Americas. This is known as the Doctrine of Discovery.

When addressing spiritual poverty anywhere in the world, it cannot be with a mentality of we who “have” and others who “have not.” Joe Sawatzky, Church Relations representative for Mennonite Mission Network and former mission worker in South Africa, said, “Our missiology is to recognize the signs of God’s prevenient grace in every culture ... This is not to deny that ‘spiritual poverty’ exists in any culture — it exists in every culture — but to see the

**Mennonite Mission Network actively strives to follow Jesus’ teachings and avoid approaches to mission that rely on colonial systems.**

testimonies to God’s grace leading toward Christ in every culture.” It is because of this that Mission Network actively strives to follow Jesus’ teachings and avoid approaches to mission that rely on colonial systems. Mission Network personnel respond to invitations from, and partner with, organizations to work alongside them in service.

Interpretations of the above verse from Matthew 28 make it easy for North American Christians to ignore the European mission field. Some groups see this passage as a trigger for the endgame of the kingdom of heaven. If they can just reach all of the “unreached peoples” of the world, the second coming will happen and the whole world will benefit.

“‘Unreached people group’ tends to be a term synonymous with ‘third-world countries,’” Joshua Garber said in a blog post<sup>1</sup> from 2016. “It’s as if [people believe] wealth and prosperity on any level better connect us with being ‘godly.’” He continued, emphasizing that there is a growing trend of churches in less-wealthy countries sending missionaries to countries considered wealthier.

Mission Network and the Garbers serve others because it is what Christ repeatedly calls us to do, in Matthew 28 and many other places in the Gospels.

Recently, the Garbers have started a youth ministry in partnership with the Mennonite community in Barcelona.

## Meet our mission workers



Photo by Alison Mae Photography

**Alisha and Joshua Garber**, along with their son, Asher, serve in Barcelona, Catalonia (a region where allegiance to Spain vies with voices calling for independence). They work alongside the leaders of Mennonite Evangelical Community of Barcelona, focusing on youth outreach and congregational mission. Alisha and Joshua previously served at LCC University in Lithuania, and are excited to see how God is at work in Barcelona.



**Brian and Noelia Fox** with their daughters, Elisa, Mikaela and Norah, serve alongside the *Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas* (the Mennonite church) in Burgos, Spain. They work with young couples in the church and in the community and nurture new leaders. The Fox family serves through the Association of Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren in Christ Churches in Spain.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has put a hold on the cherished in-person meetings of old, the youth participating in the ministry have shown excitement and are ready to delve deeply into exciting topics like creation care and stewardship.<sup>2</sup>

“We are called to share the vision of Christ to all those who will hear, through our own lives — actions and words,” Joshua Garber said in the blog from 2016. “So, when people hear our call to serve in Spain and ask, ‘Why?’, our response is ‘Why not?’” ■

<sup>1</sup> [worthwhileadventures.org/blog/2016/10/5/rationale-for-european-missions](http://worthwhileadventures.org/blog/2016/10/5/rationale-for-european-missions)

<sup>2</sup> [worthwhileadventures.org/blog/2020/5/06/starting-youth-ministry-in-a-pandemic](http://worthwhileadventures.org/blog/2020/5/06/starting-youth-ministry-in-a-pandemic)

## Farewell and blessing to my successor

Continued from page 1.

each of those encounters and looked forward to every visit. Now, as I contemplate moving on, I am sad I will not see you in the routine of my work. I feel great loss and lament. As my tenure ends July 31, 2020, I feel keenly the clutches of anticipatory grief. I would feel sorry for myself if this ending were my only reality.

Thankfully, amid the anguish of letting go of so much that I value and cherish, I find sweet relief in what is ahead. I am thrilled that the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors, after conducting a careful nationwide search, has appointed Mike Sherrill as the next executive director for the agency. I care deeply about the career of Mission Network. And with Mike's appointment, I feel greatly reassured that the agency will be in good hands: God's (whose mission it is, after all), yours (as critical partners in responding to God's call), our partners (who care deeply about bearing witness to God's salvation in their context of ministry), and Mike's (along with the Mission Network team he will lead).

Serendipitously, my recent ministry engagements have brought me into a closer working relationship with Mike. I grew increasingly impressed by his passion for mission and his sense of call. This sense has fueled his devotion through many years of mission service in Japan, and it has provided leadership as Mission Network's regional director for Asia during the past several years. I am ready (if not eager) to move on. I can do so with comfort and joy, knowing that God's mission will continue strong with Mike's leadership,



Stanley and Ursula Green.

Photo courtesy of Stanley W. Green

**Thank you** for being part of what God is doing! How is God calling you to share in additional ways with Mennonite Mission Network?

[www.MennoniteMission.net](http://www.MennoniteMission.net)  
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

**Office locations:**  
Elkhart, Indiana  
Newton, Kansas



Photo by David East

Ooyama Sensei, Nobuku Sensei, Naomi Ishihara, Teresa and Mike Sherrill pray together during a Bible study at Shiroishi Mennonite Church in 2006.

your partnership, and the commitments of our local and international partners.

It has been a wonderful gift serving alongside of you. Most days I was head over heels in love with my job. I am deeply grateful that you were a part of the journey and often the reason for my delight in the work. I appreciate how you influenced my life, helped me to grow, and touched my heart. As I conclude this reflection near the end of my service with Mission Network, I thank you for being in my life and in God's mission. You are touching lives, bringing happiness, and advancing healing in our hurting world. I have two final requests:

Forgive me that the current global health crisis did not allow me to visit you to thank you in person as I had planned.

Please support Mike with the same (or even greater) generosity as you supported me. This is important work, and you are important to this work. May I count on you?

You will remain in my heart. I wish you, and those who matter to you, safety, good health, a generous supply of happiness, and God's favor. ■

Ever grateful,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stanley W. Green".

Stanley W. Green  
Executive Director

AUG-2020