

THE BURNING BUSH

October 2026

Identify, Disciple & Release

Tim Groff

Since before we came to Dangriga, our mission has always been the same: Identify, Disciple and Release the next generation of leaders among the Garifuna.

We've spent the past 10 years living among the Garifuna in Belize, with the exception of traveling to attend conferences, visit Garifuna churches along the coast of Honduras and once a church as far away as Nicaragua. In June, when Julie and I got a chance to lead a team of Central Americans to a small Garifuna village on the coast of Honduras, it was the fulfillment of a long-held vision. We met pastor Carla Guity last year and she invited us to come to her village.

Rio Esteban, known locally as Tibiniriba, was to be the host site of this year's annual Garifuna Conference. Our goal was to spend a week teaching music and prepare the youth group of the local Garifuna church to participate in the conference. After being there just 24 hours, we could tell our goals were already being met.

Months before the trip, I began hand-picking team members; inviting those I knew would be able to manage themselves in Spanish, teach an instrument, and lead others. As the date drew near it became apparent many chosen wouldn't be able to attend, but God put a brilliantly diverse group together. I reached out to our mission partners at Pena Blanca in Honduras and got two young men to join us. Jose was from Costa Rica and Juan from Honduras. From Belize, Julie and I traveled with Jelueh, one of our worship leaders from Dangriga. A young Kekchi man named Wilmer came from Guatemala, having never been to Honduras before. The multi-cultural diversity was quite a highlight, but knowing the mission was to identify, disciple and release, all of our time together was catered toward those elements. This included challenging one another to: exercise early in the morning, visiting a local

church for music lessons before leading a worship service each night from Monday to Friday. Around 4 p.m. we'd gather at the local church and young people where children from the community would come excitedly to try an instrument. Wilmar spent time fixing a drumset and teaching basic techniques, as well as keyboarding. Julie spent time with younger girls trying to learn keyboard. Jelueh, Juan and I spent our time with a large group of



Jelueh helps eager guitar students



young people who wanted to learn the guitar. Jelueh wasn't just a musician, he assisted and also learned some himself. After about an hour of music practice, we cycled through a song-learning routine. One of our team members would teach a song, we'd invite someone from Rio Esteban to teach a song (mostly Spanish but some in Garifuna), then we'd all practice a few hand picked Garifuna songs to use for our worship session. After music practice, we'd gather together to sing the songs learned and practiced for a worship service. Each of us got

Identify, Disciple & Release

continued

a chance to lead the worship session and share a brief teaching about worship.

Because the village schools were in their semester final week of exams, we were under strict orders by the church leaders to be finished by 6:30 p.m. We abided by the rules and Friday we invited the youth of the village to join us out on the beach for a bonfire. Everyone came and it went well.

Bearing in mind our mission is to Identify, Disciple and Release, here's how I put those principles in practice.

Identify Team members with musical skills, local kids who want to play instruments, young adults capable of leading worship...

Disciple personal disciplines and team building, breakfast conversations, daily devotions, and planning meetings...

Release team members. I didn't lead the majority of the time. After modeling, each team member had to step up and try. Local kids had a chance to teach a song - and the local leadership were invited to observe and do the same.

You can put these same leadership development principles into practice with your local churches and mission outreaches as you live where God has called you to be.

Can you say Tibiniriba? Years ago there was a "white man" who lived in this village. He had a wife he loved very much who was named Tiffany. While the official name of the village is Rio Esteban, it was during that time the man began calling the village "Tiffany River." And now you can run those words together like you believe it's a local Garifuna word: "Tibini - riba . . . Tibiniriba."



Breakfast outside with Cintia and her daughter Perla Rio Esteban

For many years I've employed a tried-and-true discipling method of sitting together over an early morning cup of coffee or breakfast. During our week in Rio Esteban, I requested that the local church community host us in a different home every morning for breakfast - and they agreed. It became a daily adventure to wind our way through the streets of the small coastal village looking for landmarks to the location that was prepared for us. Our

team didn't just learn to eat the local food. They observed and participated daily within this discipleship modeling method - asking the right questions and listening. It's when we sit and 'break bread' together, look into one another's eyes, hear one another's hearts and get to be in one another's homes that we begin to understand one another.



Our team from Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize say goodbye



We have produced a YouTube "Short" if you would like to see more. Please use the QR Code or link below

https://youtube.com/shorts/V8_Lehiqp3Y?feature=shared

Franklin District
JOURNEY DAYS
November 12 & 15, 2026

Mercersburg Mennonite Church



Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and
his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!

Psalms 100:4 ESV

ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Delegate Meeting
Thursday, November 12, 2026
6:30 – 8:30 PM

LiveStream of this meeting can be found on
Mercersburg Mennonite Church's YouTube channel

Fellowship Meal
Sunday, November 15, 2026
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Praise & Thanksgiving
Sunday, November 15, 2026
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.



In this year's annual worship celebration, we envision a time of praise and thanksgiving as we reflect on places where we see the Spirit of God moving among us. Come join your brothers and sisters from around the District to proclaim and celebrate how we see the Holy Spirit using us to make disciples of Jesus, mobilize everyone as missionaries, and multiply faith communities.

Shout for joy to the LORD, Franklin District of LMC!



Upcoming Events:

- **Light the Night** – Saturday, October 31, 4-8 p.m.
Mercersburg Lions Club Park
Join us for a fun family event of **free** food, games, prizes and music.
- **Baked Potato & Salad Bar** – Friday, November 13; 4-8 p.m.
Mercersburg Mennonite Church.
Donations benefit our youth group's mission trips, winter retreat and other activities.

Monthly Events:

- **Ladies' Prayer Time** – ALL are welcome!
3rd Thursday of each month 7:30 – 8:00 a.m.
Franklin District Office
4856 Molly Pitcher Highway, Chambersburg.
- **Bible Study**
Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. (Shady Pine)

THE BURNING BUSH

of the Cumberland Valley (USPS 554-980)

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Editor: Vicki Cheek
Copy Editor: Mary Ann Zucconi

Address for editorial matters, subscriptions
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**Deadline for the January 2027 issue of
"The Burning Bush" is December 11, 2026**

Chicken & Shrimp

Supper!

Now Friday
Evening!!!

While the
food lasts!

FRIDAY!!!

October 23, 2026

Adults\$30

Children\$10

(Ages 6-12)

Take Out*....\$20

**Take out meals are
pre-portioned.*



4 -7 pm Friday

Meal Includes:

All you can eat buffet!



Menu:

BBQ Chicken
Mac & Cheese
Corn

Steamed Shrimp
Baked Beans
Applesauce

Fried Shrimp
Rolls
Cakes, Pies & More!



**COVE
VALLEY
CAMP**

5357 Little Cove Rd
Mercersburg PA 17236
717-328-3055
www.covevalleycamp.com

Upcoming Events:

- Young Adult Retreat – October 16-18
 - Fall Work Day **– November 7 at 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. – Lunch will be provided.
- Membership Banquet ** – November 7. Meal begins at 6:30 p.m.

Celebrating 60 Years of Ministry!

** If you will be attending the Membership Banquet or Fall Work Day, please call the office (717)328-3055 or email: execdirector@covevalleycamp.com

- Hobby Retreat – December 4-6

For more information, to register, or give a monetary donation, please **call (717) 328-3055** or visit [**www.covevalleycamp.com**](http://www.covevalleycamp.com)



The Cost of Following

Pastor Jagannath

Here in India, the social climate has never been favorable toward the Gospel, but this past May it has grown noticeably more tense all around us.

We are no strangers to adversity. From the very beginning of our ministry, we have faced resistance to the Gospel and persecution in various forms... so consistently that it has become part of our daily life. But this time, it took on a form that shook and surprised even us. A wedding reception for a fellow believer was being held at the home of a pastor we know. That evening, a group of right-wing extremists vandalized the place and beat up the newlywed couple. When the pastor tried to bring peace to the situation, he himself was assaulted. Some of the women in the group even tore their own clothes and falsely accused the Pastor of assaulting them. He was charged with crimes he never committed with allegations ranging from murder to molestation. Now he is behind bars and being held without bail.

In many places, churches have been broken down. Our fellowships and Sunday services have been shut down. Our leaders have been threatened, and some have been beaten. We have now turned to online fellowships and services, as this is the path that draws the least resistance for now.

The persecution we are facing right now feels different — more strategic and deliberate. Our leaders are being targeted in every way possible through threats, coercion, physical assault, and false accusations that leave them behind bars with little recourse. It seems the aim is to bring the whole Gospel movement to a standstill. Because the allegations are framed to tarnish a leader's reputation, few are willing to step up, and a flock scatters easily once the shepherd has been struck down (Matthew 26:31).

With all of this in mind, our Mission Committee decided it would be wisest for our family to relocate and to oversee the ministry's affairs remotely. I continue to travel back and forth, trying to be present with my brothers and sisters in these difficult days. It is hard being away from them, and at times I feel the weight of not being with them as often as I would like.

October 2026



This brother is being taken away and severely beaten because he attended a prayer meeting.

I am learning to embrace this new reality and do what I can to coordinate things from a distance, to keep the ministry alive, and to send help that is needed.

But not all is lost. The WIN program, our Bachelor of Ministry course, continues through online study. Our ministry among the blind continues as we are still able to feed them, and gather for our weekly fellowship together. Neha's Hope Educare, our children's ministry, continues too, though with fewer children able to attend. While Neha Educare Academy, our formal school remains open, construction on the school building slowly continues. We are deeply grateful for your prayers. And though the road is uncertain, we remain committed to the work God has entrusted to us — for we know that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion. (Philippians 1:6).



Our leaders and believers have chosen to follow Christ and to serve Him and His people — not only when the road is comfortable, but also when it becomes difficult. The missionary is one who has counted the cost and enters into hardship as a servant, not as one who holds all the answers, but as one who bears witness to Christ through word and life (1 Peter 5:2-3).

The path of Christ is the path we choose. If it takes us beyond comfort, we choose courage. If to unfamiliar cultures, we choose humility. If among people who have never heard the name of Jesus, we choose love. If hardship, we choose perseverance. The mission remains. The harvest belongs to God. The calling to follow Christ remains simple: Love people, bear witness and remain faithful.

Like the man who sold everything to acquire the pearl of great price, we know it will be worth it in the end (Matthew 13:45-46). We long for nothing more than to hear our Lord say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21) and will continue to do what we can.

Please continue to pray for us. We must press on while the window of opportunity remains open. For our Lord Himself said, “As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent Me; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4) ... and so we must, while it is still day.



One woman threatening to strangle the other to death, while accusing her of “taking Hindus one by one and converting them to Christianity”



During a prayer meeting, people suddenly arrived, took away Bibles, and tore up hymn books. They harassed the women and severely mistreated them.



An English Medium school is being locked up after the accusations the books included lessons about how to become a Christian. and that regular academic education was not being provided.



Jagannath Banerjee
Kristalaya Mercy Mission
Skype: kmercymission
www.kmmindia.org



Cumberland Valley Relief Center

Material resources CVRC shipped from

July 2025 - June 2026

Infant Care Kits - 480	Sewing Kits - 254
Hygiene Kits - 1407	Dignity Kits - 325
Relief Kits - 980	Grocery Bags - 331
School Kits - 5753	Chicken & Pork Cans - 19176
Soap Bars - 35572	Comforters & Blankets - 2418

Thank you for your help in collecting these resources to share around the world!

Taken from the CVRC Summer newsletter

Partner with us to cover the cost of kit supplies. We welcome monetary donations as well as donations of supplies.

Your group/family is also welcome to buy supplies and assemble them at your location.

Please call us for information
717-375-2088



Flood damage in Nepal, August, 2026, one day after a flash flood struck (Photo courtesy of Iswor Pudasaini)

Responding to the devastating flooding and mudslides in Nepal, MCC is working with two existing local partners, Sahayogi Hatharuko Samuha (Group of Helping Hands, SAHAS) and the National Mental Health Self-Help Organization (KOSHISH) to provide emergency relief. These partners will deliver assistance to people living in temporary evacuation centers, including churches. MCC support will include food, water purification tablets, hygiene supplies, menstrual supplies, bedding, clothes and psychosocial support in the affected districts. MCC will also support recovery efforts following the initial emergency phase. Visit MCC.org for more information.

When the Russian military invaded Ukraine in February 2022, war came to their doorsteps. The threat of missiles and drones falling nearby is ever-present.

All of you who are gathering the pencils, notebooks and other supplies that go into an MCC school kit are part of this story, too — helping to make it possible for children like these to learn and grow, even in the midst of a war.

Students begin to explore what's in their MCC school kits.



Last year, MCC shipped 89,562 school kits to Burundi, Chad, Cuba, Ethiopia, Malawi, South Sudan, Ukraine, Zambia. and the U.S.

Your donation will help change lives of those in need worldwide. All donations are tax deductible.

Donation amount \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Cumberland Valley Relief Center (CVRC). Mail to : 4225 Molly Pitcher Hwy, Chambersburg, PA 17202

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

The official registration and financial information of Cumberland Valley Relief Center may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Join us in Prayer

- Pray for John and Jeannette Puckett and their children Lazarus, Evelyn, Tirzah, Alice and Maria as they settle into Cambodia for another two years after a three month furlough. We thank God for the blessing their family was to us during their time here, and the special evening we shared together on July 26.
- Pray for Jagganath and Pompa in their ministry in India. Pray for Pompa who has been battling liver problems. Pray for their team as they minister.
- Pray for Tim and Julie Groff in their ministry in Belize. Pray for God's Spirit to flow freely among the young church there.
- Thank God for *Global Disciples* and their ministry around the world. They recently recognized Franklin District for our 20 years of support.
- Pray for the places of our world that are broken by war, disaster and pestilence. Pray especially for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, Iran, and Africa where the ebola crisis is being felt again.
- Pray for John and Debbie Coats as they are on home leave and hope to return to Cambodia in early 2027. Thank God for the blessing they were to us on July 26.
- Pray for Kandace Glenn as she finishes her ministry in Cambodia and currently lives in Indonesia with her husband. Pray for God's clear direction for them. Thank God for the blessing she was to us on July 26.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

For the new and revised
"Missionary Conference"
March 20, 2027
We hope to celebrate what
God is doing among us.

MHACV of the Cumberland Valley FUNDRAISING BANQUET

**Monday
November 9, 2026; 6:00 p.m.
Chambersburg Mennonite
Church**

"A Short and Sincere Declaration"



**Steven M. Nolt,
Professor of History & Director
of the Young Center for
Anabaptist and Pietist Studies,
Elizabethtown College**

Free Meal

Reservations Required By
November 1

Paul Clemmer: 717-377-7921
prclem43@gmail.com
Robert Martin: 717-830-7492
Roger Meyers: 717-263-0600

“Sent by Jesus in the Power of the Holy Spirit”

Bishop Eric Lehman

John 20:19-23

“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

There is so much here in this biblical text that we could explore, but I would like to direct your attention to the mission assignment Jesus gives to his disciples. “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” I highlight these words because I think we quickly forget that we too are sent people. We, like the disciple, tend to circle the wagons and hide from the threats of the world that are around us. We especially do this when it seems like everything is going wrong. We go into a self-preservation mode instead of gospel proclamation mode. Surely this is a natural response to fear. But I remind you that fear is the opposite of faith and God’s word repeatedly says, “the righteous live by faith”. (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38)

In this passage of scripture, Jesus breaks into the little fearful huddle of his disciples and he reminds them that they can not fulfill their God given purpose while locked behind closed doors. Jesus sent his disciples out to do all that he had been sent to do. And he sent them to do those things by the same means and methods in which he had done them.

What was he sent to do? Jesus proclaimed his God given mission in Luke 4:18-19 by reading from the prophet Isaiah. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

How did he do what he was sent to do? Notice that he was sent in the power of the Holy Spirit. And he now sends his disciples to go in that same power of the Holy Spirit. As fellow disciples of Jesus, our mission from Jesus can not be fulfilled in our own wisdom or strength. We must rely on the prompting and power of the Holy Spirit.

Our aim as Franklin District of LMC is to be Spirit-led people that go and make disciples of Jesus. We understand ourselves to be people who are sent out to live as missionaries in our daily lives. We know that if we all engage in this calling, the end result will be the multiplication of faith communities both here locally and all around the world.

May the Spirit of the Lord encourage and empower us to break out of our circles of self-protection, so that we can fully engage our God given mission. Amen!

Readers Corner



Cedar Grove

We continue to offer opportunities for teaching and discipleship on Wednesday evenings with our community meal and Discovery Bible Study on the book of Acts. *The Table* also continues to meet at Brother's Pizza on Monday evenings as we study the book of Romans over pizza, subs or calzones. Both are opportunities for discipling some of our newer members in their faith. The community meal on the evening of September 9th took the form of a harvest block party in the church parking lot for the community. The evening included food, music, corn hole, cake walk and a barrel train for the children.

As we continue to seek the Lord in providing the church with a new pastor, we are working together to define the core values, hopes and dreams for the congregation at Cedar Grove. Please continue to hold us in your prayers.

Pam Risser

Now, before you think I/we are just negative and giving up on serving Christ, I want to share that in many other small ways we are serving our Lord.

Some of our congregants do home visitation and some are working to get the Sunnyway Early Learning Center up and running. We do by-weekly Panera Bread deliveries to several families in the community, support teachers from Stevens Elementary school with a "Spring sandwich day", cookies during Christmas and occasionally provide extra socks and other items for the students. We are thankful for the several groups that use our facilities, on a weekly basis, to prepare meals for the community. I can't forget to mention the Bible Adventure Program that's showing God's love and Christ as our Savior to the school children.

My point is God is still using us at Cedar Street Mennonite, in small and big ways, and all of it serves Him.

Linda Mower



Cedar Street Mennonite

As I read July's Burning Bush article, which I always enjoy, I remember again how small our congregation really is.

Reading about summer Bible School at several District churches is so good to see, but our congregation is too small to attempt it alone. We are some couples, some now single, and several young at heart members (about 19 in total). Reading about the many other programs other churches are providing to others (with members of their own congregations) is informative and providing many blessings to those who attend. But here again it seems like we are too small; and almost half of our members are to the age where "the mind is willing but the body doesn't cooperate well anymore". And the fact that we have no youth attending regularly also is a hinderance to having programs for the community.



Marion Mennonite

Throughout the month of July, we hosted several speakers that shared their calls from God and how they're serving in their missions. It was during this time that our children and youth were presented with an opportunity to lovingly serve others. Through our new 'Mission and Service Adventure' project, each child was given seed money that they will use alongside their creative ideas and giftings. Through their passion and service and the prayers and support of our congregation over the coming months, the children will grow their seed money. When they have completed their project, the money they raise will be donated to the mission or organization of their choice. The children will have an opportunity to share their experiences with our congregation. We are excited to see how God will work in the hearts of our young people, teaching them not just to love others, but also God's ability to multiply something that may feel small to start.

Martina Mellott Horst

Readers Corner



Mercersburg Mennonite

Emerald Crossing was the theme for our VBS this year. As we journeyed through Psalms 23, the kids and adults alike were reminded that God loves and cares for each one of us. The lessons showed us how to cross from uncertainty to a firm foundation in God's Word through a relationship with Christ our Good Shepherd. From the planning committee, to teachers and group leaders, snack providers, AV techs and game leaders, many volunteers helped to make the event fun and successful.



Hosting an Online Auction & Fundraiser Meal for the New Birth Christian School in Dominican Republic is a highlight for us each year. It's truly a blessing to help raise funds to assist in paying the teacher's salaries. Again, it takes many volunteers pitching in and working together to make this event. Rhonda Hunsecker



Pleasant View Mennonite

Wednesday night programs are one of our mission fields at Pleasant View Mennonite Church. We have a prayer group year round and October through April we have Women's Interest Group, Youth group, and Kidz Club.

The Women's Interest Group has a time of Bible study and then an activity. The youth group is 7th through 12th graders and includes game time and studying the Bible together or working through a particular curriculum. Kidz Club is for students ages 4 years through 6th grade. We use different VBS curriculum throughout the year so students get to enjoy all the activities and lessons without being rushed. Jen Horst, our Kidz Club Leader, said "It's rewarding seeing the students be able to recite the lessons and different concepts learned".

Tawnee Poper



Shady Pine Mennonite

Shady Pine Community Church is happy to announce they have received Pastor Andy Thomas to serve as the shepherd of their congregation. Pastor Andy's ministry at Shady Pine began in June and he has been well received by both the congregation and the community. We join our brothers and sisters at Shady Pine in celebrating God's provision for their needs. Bishop Eric Lehman



Andy and his wife Cassondra, (sons) Ryan and Tyler, (daughters) Sadie and Kyrie.

Intergenerational Volunteering



It's a summer morning at a Winnipeg MCC Thrift shop and the back room is bustling with activity. Linda, who has volunteered since around 2016, is not working alone. Her husband Marc and 13 year old grandson Max are volunteering with her again.

When Max talks about volunteering, he doesn't make it sound like a chore. "It just seems good to do, and it makes you feel good," he says. There is always something to do and someone nearby." Linda smiles when she talks about Max in the shop and says he has done it all. When the shop gets busy, she can hand him a job and trust him to finish it - confident his work doesn't need to be double checked. Volunteers nearby pipe in, saying "we love having him" and "he's a good kid".

Intergenerational volunteering makes us all better. It reminds us that we are all the same and a little different." Kristine Heinrichs, MCC Manitoba's thrift coordinator, says intergenerational volunteering is becoming more

common, especially in the summer, when families travel and visit each other. She also notes that many people think volunteering must be long-term or for long hours. But short-term volunteers "add flavour", she says and every gift of time and skill helps the thrift community and MCC's work. Volunteering across ages helps everyone. Young volunteers often know trends and products that puzzle older volunteers. Older volunteers, in turn, teach the value of hard work, consistency and generosity.

Visit mccthrift.org



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