



Meet Evana's new Executive Director, Matt Hamsher!

We are excited for this next season at Evana with Matt Hamsher as our new executive director! Many have known Matt as the chairman of Evana's board of directors and the pastor of Longenecker Anabaptist Evangelical Fellowship (LEAF) in Ohio. Here's a bit more you may not know about our new director.

Matt grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio and attended Walnut Creek Mennonite with his parents and two younger siblings. He accepted Christ and was baptized at the age of 15 after watching *Like a Thief in the Night* with his youth group. He chuckles thinking back on how the film scared him, but on a serious note, he says it really made him think about his faith becoming his own, not just his family's.

Matt grew in his faith and felt the call to ministry at a young age. "In tenth grade we had to write about a future profession," he says, "I wrote about being a farmer, a teacher, or a pastor." At his home church, he was blessed with leaders who came alongside of him and fostered his potential. His own pastor let him follow him around in the summers during college at Eastern Mennonite University. There at EMU, Matt met his future wife, Kristina.

Three years later they were married. Eventually Matt came back to Walnut Creek as an assistant pastor at after receiving a Master of Divinity. After serving a time at Walnut Creek, Matt and his family moved to Pasadena, CA to study Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. At Fuller, Matt came in contact with many people curious about the Anabaptist faith. Those discussions impacted him as he learned to communicate with Christians from various backgrounds. Matt then became a district elder for pacific southwest Mennonite conference



Ex. Director Matt Hamsher and Board Chair Larissa Moore-Willard.

and served there before returning to Ohio and becoming a regional pastor with the Ohio conference. And finally, for the last five and a half years, Matt has pastored at LEAF.

Currently Kristina teaches 4th grade at Central Christian, and they have two daughters. Carrie is a first year student at Bethel University in Mishawaka, IN, and Andrea is a Jr. at Central Christian. Matt and his family enjoy traveling together. Their last family trip led them to Mongolia where they have some mission connections. "I love to travel and see new places," Matt says. He also enjoys sports and plays basketball two times a week with a group of men in his area.

Moving into New Ground

In January of 2015, Hamsher met with a group of pastors at Hartville, OH. Out of that meeting, Evana was born. Matt and a few others were asked to be a part of a board of directors. They appointed John Troyer as executive director and Troyer has led the movement since then. "I'm so grateful to John for leading these past four years," says Matt. Last fall when the search for a new executive director become public, Matt said

he, “felt a very strong sense of calling to the position.” At the same time both he and his wife felt hesitant in leaving the pastoring position. Through encouraging words and much prayer and discernment, God made it clear individually to both Matt and Kristina, that this was what he was moving them into. “There have been a number of times [in our lives] when it felt like we stepped out in faith,” says Matt. “We have a similar feeling now.” Matt spoke of the big responsibility, but it’s evident he is relying on the Holy Spirit’s guidance and provision.

His trust in God’s leading was just one of the things the search committee liked. Larissa Moore-Willard has served on the board of directors and was a part of the search process. She recalls asking the candidates about their ideas for Evana’s future. “His [Matt’s] answer was so God-depend and God-centered,” she says. “There were several awesome candidates, but only one that was meant to be the next director.”

Matt’s excitement about the new position is clear, but he recognizes the mission is bigger than just one person. “It feels like we started out with a limited vision and it has expanded,” he says. “We have discovered additional things along the way.” Matt will bring a listening ear and a deep understanding of the Anabaptist faith. He hopes to be a connecting force between past, present, and future. Although it’s sad for him to leave his pastoring position, he is ready for what God has in store for him personally and for the organization as a whole.

Letter from the New Executive Director

Dear Evana brothers and sisters,
I feel blessed and honored to have been called to serve as your next executive director. We have a great staff, a growing membership, and amazing resources to share. Yet I believe God is calling us to not be content with consolidating

where we are today, but to continue to move forward by welcoming and partnering with all who share our core Anabaptist and evangelical convictions. What hopes and dreams has the Lord given you for our Network? I’d love to hear from you as we continue to follow God’s leading together. ~Matt Hamsher

Larissa Moore-Willard elected as Evana’s new Board Chair!

As Matt Hamsher, the previous board chair, has accepted the position of executive director, Larissa Moore-Willard has been elected the new chairman of the board. Larissa has previously served as vice-chair.

Larissa has been a part of Evana for three years now and believes strongly in its mission. When asked why she joined, she stated part of Evana’s vision statement; *Evana provides a home for men and women seeking to covenant together around the primacy of Jesus, obedience to Scripture, and bold evangelism.* “We live in a world that is in need of bold evangelism and the love of Jesus,” she says. “Scripture must be authority.”

Larissa previously planted Victory Community Church and pastored there for eight and a half years. She is currently a part of Dayspring Christian Fellowship and uses her gifts there, as well as preaching and teaching on occasion in Evana churches. Last year in July, she wed her best friend, Randy Willard, who has been a great source of encouragement and support to her.

We are thrilled to see how God will use Larissa’s gifts in this new season. “I’m going into this with God’s vision, to lead the board and stay the course,” she says, “I’m really looking forward to working with the board and leading Evana to that next place.” ~
