



Hope, Disorientation, and Blessing

A local pastor learns from Anabaptist brothers and sisters in India.

Last October, an Evana pastor from Pleasant View Church in Goshen, Indiana, got the chance to experience Anabaptist culture in a completely different part of the world. The brothers and sisters there have much to teach us all. Here are a few of Pastor Tyler Hartford's reflections from his own experience.

Warm hospitality draws you in. Bright clothing reflects the midday sun. Spicy and complex food evokes the varied landscape. North Central India is off the beaten path for most Westerners who travel to the larger coastal cities, but the region is the beloved home to several Anabaptist groups. During an October 2018 trip, I spent a week visiting with and learning from members of the Mennonite Church of India and the General Conference Mennonite Church of India. My goal was to simply be present with pastors and leaders and walk together with them on matters of faith and life. Since the Pleasant View leadership team has been encouraging members to "invite others to follow Jesus, and walk together in the journey," this trip also helped stretch me in my own living out of that mission. Three words describe my time in India and how the experience is bearing fruit both here and there.

Hope

For half the trip, we explored Romans 15:13 with church leaders and members. We prayed over each other, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." We wrestled with it. We rested in it. We revisited church history from the start, through major



turning points and into the founding of the Indian church. Hope in Christ resulted in many fruits.

Demonic spirits were cast out. Students were calmed over their studies. Lives were given to Jesus. Healing was claimed. Miraculous provision took place. I learned this generation of global believers is positioned to teach

- Western Christians about true hope in Jesus Christ.
- What are we doing to allow the hope of Christ to flow through us with all joy and peace, with all power of the Holy Spirit? I found these followers know the hope of Jesus, and it is evident in the faith they live out.

Disorientation

- It's important for believers to find themselves disoriented. To find yourself as a minority and at the mercy of those who are hosting

you, can be a disorienting experience. As our own Western culture becomes more and more unfamiliar with Christianity, we have much to learn from our brothers and sisters about how to live in a society that doesn't automatically affirm the faith. I continue to learn that this process of disorientation, or being dislocated and placed in circumstances outside of your control, is a spiritual practice. Not only does it cause us to rely on God, but it gives us empathy. What does it take for us to learn to extend mercy and hospitality to those who might find themselves disoriented around us?

Blessing

While some of my time in India was dedicated to testifying about Anabaptist theology and history alongside my ministry friend, some



of the most powerful moments involved allowing others to be a blessing to me. We give and receive blessing when we sit and kneel at the feet of our brothers and sisters and let them pray over us, worship with us, and testify of God's goodness in the face of trials. One thing I learned was that ministers don't ever leave a home without blessing the space and the occupants. What does it mean for the priesthood of all believers to enter homes, workplaces, and public spaces and leave the peace of Christ behind? Surely this is something we could all grow in as well.

I have stayed general about names, places and events to protect identities and ministries. However, please know that there are many global brothers and sisters who have much to teach us about faithfully

following Jesus, and they need our prayers. These brothers and sisters invite us to come, sit at their feet and allow them to bless us with their wisdom, their experience, and their love.

- Pastor Tyler Hartford

Letter from the Executive Director



In a few months, I will be making the transition out of my role as executive director and my wife Sheila will also leave her position as event coordinator. Serving all of you for the last four years has been such a privilege and a gift! I'm excited to see the continuity that Matt Hamsher's leadership will bring. I also want to share with you our plans for the future. In May, Sheila and I will become pastors at Clinton Brick Church near Goshen, IN to help them make a new start as a church. We're excited about this venture, and look forward to seeing how God will breathe new life into a 164-year-old church. We're praying now for God to clarify the vision, to bring together a launch team, and help us see His timing. I will also be continuing to serve as regional pastor for some churches in northern Indiana and developing our leadership training business, Thrive Leadership Center. We're excited to focus our time and investment with Evana Network back into our local community. I've learned so much from our pastors, staff, and other leaders over these last four years. I believe our best future at Evana is ahead of us as the church becomes more and more focused on discipleship that transforms communities. Thank you!

-John Troyer