



Village Missions Staff Conferences have built an array of powerful memories over the years.

Missionaries offering a melodious sacrifice of praise to God. Gathered in small groups, praying and sharing one another's burdens. Laughing over a meal. Swapping ideas for ministry and learning from each other.

Missionary couples sharing the simple joy of *sitting together* as they worship God and absorb teaching from his Word.



Missionary kids reuniting with friends and creating new memories as they play and learn together.

The refrain of the conference theme song runs through all these images: *"With each breath he's given, praise the Lord. In these times we live in, we will praise the Lord. Throughout every season, I am sure we have every reason to praise the Lord."*¹

This week is vital because missionaries are scattered in small towns and rural communities across the country. They serve and minister to people in many ways, week by week. As one wife said, *"Rural ministry can be lonely."* The staff conference refreshes, encourages, and equips them for another year of rural ministry.



Village Missions holds five staff conferences each summer across the US: in California, Oregon, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and rural New York. VM leaders attended all of them, and Village Missions Board members participated.

A missionary family enjoys a meal together; missionaries join together in prayer; missionary kids create lasting bonds.

Read on for quotes from missionaries, input from volunteers, and more stories of the impact of Staff Conference.

¹ Rejoice by Keith & Kristyn Getty and Rend Collective (2022)



Two missionaries connect during mealtime; VM wives spend time in worship and learning during the ladies session; VM ladies join together in prayer.

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Staff Conferences



LEARNING

Together

Missionaries learned from and ministered to each other at conference.

The focus of this year's conferences was "Investing for Eternity," based on 2 Timothy 2:2. The speakers for the conferences were seasoned VM pastors from another region. They helped their fellow missionaries consider how to train and equip the next generation of church leaders more effectively.

Throughout the week, missionaries encouraged one another in many ways. They came alongside a missionary wife undergoing cancer treatments. Held an auction to raise money for the VM Helping Fund. Gathered around a missionary's wheelchair to pray for him and his wife.

"Several nights we stayed up late hearing the hurts of others, praying with them and encouraging them to continue to be faithful." Dennis & Leslie Burke, missionary speaker at the High Plains conference

"We connected with a new missionary couple and helped them through some struggles we are familiar with." James & Meredith Knoop

"Connecting with other missionaries and hearing how God is working on their fields encouraged us." JD & Katie Milton

As missionary Joe Beard wrote, *"It was a great time of fellowship and learning! I always look forward to staff conference, which was exceptional this year."*

NEW
THIS
YEAR

Breakout SESSIONS

We tried something new this year. We offered breakout sessions on a variety of topics. These included:

- » Investing in Your Marriage with Grace
- » The Benefit and Burden of Difficult People
- » Church Revitalization: From Just Surviving to Really Thriving
- » Thinking Right When Things Go Wrong
- » Navigating Difficult Conversations
- » Loving What You Have; Working on What's Missing
- » Ministering in the Mundane

Many missionaries expressed appreciation for these sessions.





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Programs

FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Another essential element of the conferences was the programs for VM kids and teens. We are so grateful to the volunteers who spoke into these kids' lives and created fun, meaningful activities for them.

"As someone who grew up with VM Conference as a major highlight of the summer, it does my heart good to see my own children so excited about it." Caleb Walker (Village Missionary and VM kid)

"As our children are getting older, this annual event becomes more and more precious to us." Dan & Amber Mason

"Thank you to the childcare workers who poured time and energy into our children." Nate & Claire Walters



Clockwise from top right: a youth leader engages with a group of teens after a session; at the New York conference, kids participated in a matchbox car Grand Prix; a young VM kid enjoys a craft project; a group of teens works through a Bible lesson; the youngest VM kids benefit from loving care; conference allows for special time for parents to spend with their children.



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VOICE
OF A

Volunteer

My husband and I were recently given the opportunity to serve at the Village Missions Conference at Conference Point, Lake Geneva. He volunteered with the middle and high schoolers while I served in the nursery. It was such a blessing to be able to support and encourage the missionaries with children so they could be refreshed and challenged during the sessions (and to love on their kiddos!). We were also delighted to meet many of the Village Missionaries in attendance. We are thankful to the Lord for this special opportunity!

- Roy and Tracey Kosin

Fellowship FRIENDSHIPS, AND FAMILY TRADITIONS

This was the third conference for missionaries Logan and Jennifer Matenaer. As VM candidates, they helped with the kids' program at the 2022 conference. Last year, they were new missionaries with a baby daughter. This year, they enjoyed deepening the friendships they formed in previous years.

"Visiting with the other missionaries is refreshing," Logan said. "We find it freeing to share openly with them in ways people on our field may not understand."

They also appreciated the sessions and opportunities to glean ideas for ministry.

Meanwhile, their daughter received loving care in the nursery, where Logan's mother and sister and Jennifer's parents were childcare volunteers! Jennifer smiles to think of her daughter growing up with these other missionary kids.

Logan and Jennifer have even created a conference family tradition: they walk beside Lake Geneva and then enjoy a treat at the local ice cream shop.



Healing and relaxing. Restful. Refreshing. Encouraging. These are some of the ways missionaries described the conferences, which were made possible by generous ministry partners. You, too, can contribute to staff conference and bless a missionary family in the coming year.

Investing in people for eternal impact,

John Adams

Dr. John Adams, Executive Director



Village Missions

Helping Country Churches Thrive

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