



VALLEY SIMSBURY REPORT

Mark Woof | Valley Simsbury Pastor

One year ago, the pioneering team for Valley Simsbury was commissioned at Valley's Annual Meeting to pilot different approaches to ministry, with a primary focus on reaching the growing unchurched and de-churched population. At the time, we were a small group of believers with passion and resolve, yet little foresight as to the glorious journey God would take us on.



In September, we began meeting for worship and missional training on Saturday evenings in The Venue at the Avon Campus. During those gatherings, our team of 70 adults, along with teens and children, piloted a church that gathered around tables. We worshipped together, received the preaching of God's Word, and then engaged in group discussions. The chief focus of this period was reorienting our lives around a missional lifestyle. In other words, we believed God was sending us out to live like missionaries in the spaces we live, work, and play. Mission begins with presence, and we talked regularly about meaningful presence and real relationships with those who are unchurched or unlikely to come to church.

We were excited to see the first fruits of salvation in October, when a young Army veteran gave his life to Christ after claiming years beforehand that he would never go back to church. In the aftermath of this glorious conversion, we saw a longtime Christian step into discipleship, for the first time, as he walked alongside this new believer and rooted him in the faith. Several believers began to harness the missional and disciple-making lifestyle. Along with this fruit, we also saw how hard this change. It's not easy to reorient your life and relationships. It begins with small steps into intentional prayer and relationships, and the fruit often takes time to grow -- perhaps years. ... *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed ... though it is the*

smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants ..." (Matthew 13:31-32 NIV)

During this season of missional "reorientation," our leadership team was also exploring how to move offsite and where to meet in the new year. Initially, we planned to set up a large location for worship each week. We quickly changed plans as we realized how much energy and service hours it would take. We didn't want to diminish the focus being placed on missional living. Thus, we decided on a monthly worship celebration together, meeting the other weeks in smaller and simpler missional communities. These MCs combined the worship service and the community environment into one.

We launched off-site for our first official service on December 23, meeting in the heart of the town at historic Eno Memorial Hall. We were also excited to begin our first Missional Community at the Popover Café, which would later move to Ana's Kitchen (another café in the heart of the town). The Master's School also blessed us, providing a wonderful home for other MCs.

Over the past year, we have learned a significant amount about Missional Communities. We've learned a tremendous amount about missional living and discipleship. And the Kingdom has grown! We're learning how to disciple out in the marketplace. We're growing in our relationships with neighbors. We're becoming more fluent in sharing the Gospel. And we're loving this walk of faith. For *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1) And we're excited to see all that God has in store as we join Him on mission in growing the Kingdom!