

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

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Young and surprised — and needed

Seven of the fifteen persons on the Virginia Mennonite Conference Faith and Life Commission have a common history: they or their spouse were ordained by Bishop Truman Brunk Sr. of the Warwick River Mennonite Church in Newport News, Va. These overseers share the following stories about their ordination:

In March 1951, Myron and Esther Augsburgers drove from Ohio to Virginia, preparing to enroll at Eastern Mennonite College. That same day, Bishop Truman traveled from his home in Newport News, Va., found the Augsburgers on campus, and introduced them to the needs of a new church in Florida. Myron explained that he was planning to return to college, but the Bishop said, “That can wait. We need you there now.” By May the couple was installed at Tuttle Avenue Mennonite Church, and in September Myron’s ordination took place at the Warwick River Mennonite Church in Newport News.

Michael and Peggy Shenk remember that Brother Truman stopped by their home for a visit, telling of the need for a pastor in the emerging Newtown Gospel Mission, an outreach of the Tuttle Avenue congregation in Sarasota, Fla. Brother Truman explained that he had already spoken to Michael’s parents about their only son being asked to leave the family farm for a church assignment 1,000 miles away. Michael was 22 years old. In the fall of 1953, there was a commissioning and farewell service at the home church, Warwick River, before the Shenks left for Florida where he was licensed for this work. Michael was ordained in the Spring of 1956.

Frank Nice was 22 when he was “tapped” in 1954; he was ordained the next year in Ohio, four months before he and Evelyn were married. Frank says, “Looking back, I am still amazed that Brother Truman asked me to serve the Chestnut Ridge Mennonite Church near Orrville, that the church accepted me, and that I accepted the assignment! This did affirm a call from God in my early years.” Frank and Evelyn are both overseers in the Potomac District.

When Ed Godshall was a senior at Eastern Mennonite High School, Truman met him in the hallway at school and asked about Ed’s parents and their

church-planting efforts in Hickory, N.C. At the end of the conversation, Truman said, “I hope you will go back to Hickory and be the pastor there.” In later meetings with the church at Hickory, the members affirmed Ed’s call. He was ordained in 1958 at age 23 and ordained as bishop in 1970. Ed asked Truman if there was some kind of training for being a bishop and the response was, “You will need to learn it like the rest of us have learned. You will do all right.”

Ken Brunk was teaching at Warwick River Christian School, Newport News, Va., when Mahlon Blosser invited him and Twila to consider a mission assignment in Jamaica. Truman and the Mission Board planned Ken’s ordination service at Warwick River Mennonite Church shortly before Ken and Twila left for Jamaica in August 1961. Ken is not a member of the Faith and Life Commission, but Twila, his partner in ministry, is a member at large.

At the age of 31, Sam Weaver was called by Linden Wenger for Lindale Mennonite Church. Linden wanted the ordination to take place at the Lindale Church, but Bishop Truman said, “Since he is a member at Warwick River, let’s ordain him here and he can be ‘on loan’ to Northern District for a brief period of time.” Thirty-seven years later, Sam is still with Northern District.

Truman Brunk, Jr. relates, “My father had a passion for calling persons into pastoral ministry. As one of the Virginia Bishops, he sometimes traveled twice a week from his home in Denbigh to Harrisonburg. Often he was needed in Florida, North Carolina, Ohio and other places, connecting with churches of Virginia Conference.

“One day I was called and I felt the big hands of my father and Linden Wenger on me! Through the years that followed, my father was my best ‘cheerleader.’ Now in heaven, he stands in the balcony cheering for all he called into ministry.”



Bishop Truman Brunk Sr. was instrumental in calling seven of the fifteen members of the Faith and Life Commission to the ministry. Bishop Truman died in 1995.

• Betty Brunk
daughter-in-law of Truman Brunk, Sr.

At home for Christmas

Two words seem to go with Christmas—"home" and "gifts." People go home for Christmas, and gifts are associated more with Christmas than any other holiday. This year both will be noticeably absent from our experience. Earlene and I are not planning to be home for Christmas. We're not

going to visit parents and our children won't see their grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins. We won't even be at our own house. We'll be in Trinidad. We also decided to largely dispense with the traditional giving of gifts. Since our children decided to join us here, we agreed that the airfare was expense enough.

In place of home and gifts, what will be our experiences this Christmas? We'll go Christmas caroling. We won't have to bundle up against the cold, of course; we'll probably perspire a bit. We'll wander around the neighborhood streets, enjoying the tropical breezes and waving palm trees. We'll sing "Joy to the World," "Silent Night," and maybe even "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." We'll participate in Soup for Charity, a wonderful evening of a simple meal, program, and fellowship, all for the purpose of raising funds for various needs in the community.

We'll go to several Christmas programs. Each will have their music, dramas, and, of course, refreshments. Though not at home, we'll go to many homes,



Loren Horst
President of VMBM

getting more than just refreshments. On Christmas morning, we'll be in church at 5:30 a.m. Then we'll have breakfast at the church. Christmas will provide numerous opportunities to be with people.

Each time I spend Christmas in a place like Trinidad, I'm reminded of two things. It is because of Jesus that we gather, worship, fellowship, and celebrate Christmas. That simple truth is profound. If it were not for Jesus, there would be no Christmas. Also, if it were not for those who are willing to tell Trinidadians about this Jesus, there would be no Christmas in this particular land. We worship and celebrate Christmas this year because of Jesus, and because someone told. What a Gift! And I'll feel right at home. You see, in these two things—the importance of the Gift and the necessity of sharing that Gift—Trinidad is no different than Virginia or North Carolina or Ohio or any other place touched by the Gift of Jesus Christ.

Loren Horst

Knoxville Mennonites learn about peace



Rich Meyer (*right*), who works with Christian Peacemaker Teams, shared ideas about peacemaking in Israel and Palestine at Knoxville (Tenn.) Mennonite Church on September 29. When asked, "Whose side are you on over there?" Meyer says, "[I'm] on the side of the peacemakers." Meyer spoke after a joint potluck with Concord Mennonite Church and again that evening in a session organized by Jim Harb (*left*), who has been actively promoting Mideast peace through efforts in the Knoxville area for many years.

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Rachel Smith

Carol Rhodes, Yvonne Martin, and Edith Shenk browse the books and gifts that were available for sale during the Mennonite Women of Virginia Retreat in October.

Mennonite Women gather for retreat

An alcoholic mother, an emotionally and physically abusive childhood, anorexia, a serious kidney infection that led to a permanent feeding tube, and now melanoma and chemo treatments and she still says, “We must trust in the sovereignty of God!” It is only by the grace of God that she can say that wholeheartedly.

This year’s retreat theme was “The Aroma of God’s Grace,” with guest speaker Glenda Revell from Smithfield, Va. Glenda shared her personal life’s story of tragedy and loss, yet how she was continually “Led by Grace.” She incorporated strong Biblical truths with her story and at times she would sing hymns that had strengthened her as a child. It was a very touching and inspiring testimony, and the 185 women present often joined her in song.

Glenda gave us eight points to live by, guidelines that allow God’s grace in our lives to be “Overcoming Grace” during the struggles and difficulties we encounter. She then encouraged us to be actively “Imparting Grace” to others by being servants, and having a servant’s attitude as Jesus did.

Sunday morning we were reminded that nothing is more important than “Keeping Company with the Father.” His desire is to have a relationship with us that will grow and become more intimate as we “keep company” with him.

Throughout the retreat weekend, we were blessed as Sharon Wenger and friends led us in uplifting praise songs and worshipful hymns. On Saturday afternoon there was a special time to commission each other to go forth as “the aroma of God’s grace” in our communities. We were challenged and inspired, we shared tears, laughter, and songs, and the Lord met each of us in unique, individual ways. Thank you, Lord, for a wonderful retreat!

• Deb Pardini
President of Mennonite Women of Virginia

Greenmonte celebrates 50 years of ministry

Greenmonte Mennonite Church celebrated 50 years of ministry in the community of Stuarts Draft, Va., with a pig roast, evening sharing program, and Sunday morning homecoming service on the weekend of October 19-20. Greenmonte was established as the result of the commissioning in 1949 of Alphaeus Burkholder, Marion Weaver and Ira Showalter to plant a new church. Three years later on April 23, 1952, a small church building was rented and John Martin was licensed and appointed to begin the work. He selected five families from Springdale to help establish the new congregation. On December 6, 1953, the first service was held in their new church building.

The Saturday evening meal was served under a tent in the cool autumn air, and was topped off with 21 delicious pies made by the Greenmonte women. Following the meal, a program emceed by Rodney Martin, grandson of John Martin, included four-part hymn singing, memories of the early years, and a humorous skit about the funny things that have happened through the years. The church was filled to the brim with current and former members who rejoiced together for the impact that Greenmonte’s ministry has had on their lives.

The Sunday morning service continued the celebration with special music. Earl Monroe, former pastor of Greenmonte for 15 years, gave the morning message on the subject of “Living Stones.” To culminate the memorial to the work of Greenmonte in the lives of families, a liturgy was read outside beside two piles of stones that were collected by the church families from area riverbeds. These stones will be used to construct the base of a new sign for the church, and will serve to prompt the question, “What do these stones mean?” (Joshua 4:6). This question will be answered with testimonies of all that God has done in this church over the past 50 years, inspiring faith and hope for all that he will do in the 50 years to come.

• Tanya Brenneman
Greenmonte Mennonite Church
with Earl Monroe, Mtn. View Mennonite Church



Leo Buingardner

Greenmonte Mennonite Church, Stuarts Draft, Va., celebrated 50 years of ministry in October.

Partners in Mission

short-term service opportunities

Albania
July 2003

Baltimore, Md.
Maintenance on school
June 29-July 5, 2003



Puerto Rico
Work team
July 2003

South Africa
Support to local church
August 2003

Haiti
Work team
December 30, 2002 -
January 5, 2003

Harrisburg, Pa.
Maintenance work
June 16-22, 2003

Trinidad
Work with worship leading,
drama, and youth
August 2003

Italy

Friendship evangelism
July 5-20, 2003

Jamaica

Work team
February 2003

Teach Bible school
July 2003

Kenya

Work and learn group
June 2003

Nicaragua

Work team
November 2003

Philadelphia, Pa.

Service in the inner city
Anytime during Summer
2003

Belize

Work team and evangelism
August 2-17, 2003

Ghana

Work team
June 2003



Zimbabwe

Work team
Attend Mennonite World
Conference
August 2003

Partners in Mission

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President Horst serves Trinidad churches



Earlene Horst

Along with his wife, Earlene, Loren Horst, President of VMBM, mentors Babes and Ramesh Jaimani. Ramesh serves as pastor of Charlieville Mennonite Church in Trinidad.

Presidents of mission agencies usually work in an office, call meetings of various staff members, speak in constituency churches, and preach sermons at mission rallies. Loren Horst, president of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, does these things. But for four months he is serving as a mentor and teacher with the Mennonite Churches in Trinidad.

Before Loren was invited to become VMBM's 15th president, he and his wife Earlene were invited to consider a three-year term in Trinidad. The Horsts had served there from 1987-1990 and were considering returning to this most southern Caribbean island. When Loren accepted the presidency, it was with the understanding that he and Earlene would go to Trinidad for a shortened time to walk with the brothers and sisters there.

Loren teaches a missiology class at the West Indies Theological College. In addition, he and Earlene serve as mentors for the pastor couple of

the Charlieville Mennonite Church. Four congregations make up the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago (MCTT), each led by a Trinidadian pastor. MCTT is implementing a vision to increase to ten congregations by 2015. The message of Christ's love and redemption is welcomed in this setting.

How does it work for a president to direct an agency from thousands of miles away? Loren says, "Thanks to the staff at VMBM who fill their roles well, there have been few problems with the management of the agency while I am in Trinidad. The ease and speed of communication in today's world makes keeping in contact relatively simple." Loren returned to Virginia for the Board meetings in mid-October and will return more permanently on December 31.

Would Loren recommend a "hands-on" presidency for other mission agency leaders? "Boards and staff should be encouraged to help make it happen," Loren says. "Mission administrators would do well to consider a short-term mission assignment from time to time. Such experiences can be energizing, sensitizing, instructive, and humbling. They can also be a gift to the receiving church. The relationships thus established strengthen our ongoing partnership for the sake of the Gospel."

The arrangement may be unusual, but the rewards are worth it. "Across the street and around the world" applies to presidents too.

• Gloria Lehman
VMBM Caribbean Regional Assistant

Congregational Resource Center

Kathy has been hit by the Christmas bug and there are lots of new resources at the Center! Here's a sampling:

Christian Basics Bible Study Series has good authors and titles such as:

- **My Heart — Christ's Home** by Robert Boyd Munger
- **Too Busy Not to Pray** by Bill Hybels
- **God's Word for Contemporary Christians** by John Stott

Youth Curriculum:

- **The Teachings of Jesus Put to the Test of Time** (video)
- **Wild Truth Bible Lessons for Junior Highs**

Marriage:

- **Boundaries in Marriage** video curriculum
- **For Bitter or Better Video: Keys for a Great Marriage** by John Drescher

For pastors:

- **Five Smooth Stones** by Eugene Peterson
- **Under the Unpredictable Plant** by Eugene Peterson

Leadership:

- **Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church**
- **Current Thoughts and Trends**—a periodical that summarizes key articles from a variety of magazines

The Center has assistants and resources that will help you take some of the stress out of the upcoming holidays!

The Resource Center is located at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and is open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. A key is available at the EMU Information Office for use after hours.

Visit our website at www.emu.edu/mcrc to browse our catalog. Contact us at 540-432-4219 or wengerkw@emu.edu.

December 2002 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

1 John Schaefer of Zion Hill Mennonite Church leaves today for ten weeks of service with Partners in Mission in Haiti. Pray for John as he travels and serves the church there.

8 Partners in Mission sends Lowell Haarer and Ed Heatwole today to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They will serve in teaching and evangelism as organized by Together with Christ. Let us pray for them as they serve.

15 Potomac District churches are involved in a variety of community ministries through City on a Hill funding. Pray that these ministries will continue to bring wholeness to their communities.

22 Pray for the congregations who are searching for and/or processing pastoral candidates. Pray also for several of the VMC districts as they seek long-term overseers to fill upcoming vacancies.

29 Tennessee-Carolina-Kentucky District is planning for a ministry to the Hmong community in Hickory, N.C. Pray for church planter Chaiya Hadtasunern as he relocates to Hickory.

Monday

2 Pray for Conference Minister Owen Burkholder and the VMC officers—Joe Longacher, Mark Wenger, Ron Piper, and Malinda Stoltzitis—as they prepare for their meeting later this month.

9 Pray for Lawrence Yoder of Eastern Mennonite Seminary as he leaves tomorrow to teach at the Grace Assembly Mission in Haiti. He will be teaching on the subject of “Gospel Foundations for our Church’s Mission.”

16 Navin Benny teaches the baptismal class of seven persons in the Mennonite Church of Chaguanas. Thank God for their commitment to Christ and pray that they may grasp what it means to truly follow Him.

23 Stephanie Stoner is involved in the women’s Bible study that meets in Top Hill, Jamaica. Ask for God’s love, guidance, and wisdom for the women who meet and share together weekly.

30 VMBM desires to develop the missionary efforts in Kosovo by sending long-term personnel into the Decan area. Pray that the Lord would call and prepare persons to serve in this needy area, which is open to our ministry.

Tuesday

3 In addition to teaching at the Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica, Jesse Lucke is learning a lot about the natural beauty of the island. Thank God for the variety of experiences he is participating in.

10 Ken Stoner and Omar Reid (a former student) teach woodworking, welding, and maintenance skills at the Maranatha School in Jamaica. May God grant them patience and insight as they work with the students.

17 Ask the Lord for a spirit of gratitude and generosity as congregations, conference agencies, and Mennonite Church USA programs face financial challenges at this time of the year.

24 Pray that the Holy Spirit would break through to church members who might miss the true experience of Christmas during this materialistic, commercialized holiday season.

31 As individuals and as congregations, we have experienced both good and bad times during 2002. Thank God for the blessings and ask for courage to face the difficulties as we enter 2003.

Wednesday

4 Pray for the church leaders who are planning for meetings next summer—Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly and Missions Festival, Mennonite Church USA Assembly, and Mennonite World Conference.

11 Pray for the congregations in Virginia Mennonite Conference who continue to discern their relationship with VMC and Mennonite Church USA. Pray also for the Conference leaders who are involved in churchwide opportunities.

18 The newly formed congregation of Bart-Sud (south) in Italy is planning a special Christmas event in order to reach out to friends and neighbors. Pray that many persons will attend and receive this gift of love.

25 This Christmas day is celebrated in various ways around the world. But we all join together with fellow believers everywhere—“O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!”

This month’s prayer calendar is sponsored by Marvin and Carolyn Slabaugh in honor of their mothers, Mary Slabaugh and Naomi Campbell, and in memory of their fathers, Moses Slabaugh and Lester Campbell.

If you would like to sponsor one or more months of the prayer calendar, contact Gloria Lehman at 540-434-9727 or 1-800-707-5535.

Thursday

5 Pray for Norma Teles as she oversees a pre-school program run by Youth With a Mission in the city of Lezhe, Albania. Norma will be sharing in this ministry on a part-time basis during the next year.

12 Richard and Margaret Keeler have numerous opportunities to connect with a wide variety of people. Join them in asking God’s guidance for helpful conversation and witness in these interactions.

19 Karen Brunk takes her Land Rover, named Silas, over mountainous terrain on Thursdays as she visits people who are unable to get to the clinic. Ask for God’s protection of her in these travels.

26 As the Mennonite Congregational Resource Center enters its last year of funding from a grant from the Lilly Foundation, pray for wisdom regarding funding for the ongoing operation of the Center.

Friday

6 Pray for Conference Minister Owen Burkholder as he preaches at Washington (D.C.) Community Fellowship on Sunday and at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg on the following Sunday.

13 Steve Campbell of Crossroads Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va., has been appointed to a missionary assignment in Albania. Pray for all aspects of preparation and that funding will come together by Summer 2003.

20 Pray for the Missional Church Team—Beryl Jantzi, chair, Joe Bontrager, Beryl Brubaker, and Owen Burkholder—as they travel around the conference telling and gathering stories of what God is doing through our congregations.

27 Thank God for enabling Loren and Earlene Horst to serve in Trinidad four months. Their love of Trinidad and its people was evident as they related to the Mennonite Church there.

Saturday

7 The Maranatha School for the Deaf will hold their annual Christmas program and school festival tomorrow. May God bless the activities and the community that surrounds them with respect and support.

14 Pray for the Mennonite Church of Chaguanas in Trinidad as they look for land to build a church building. Also pray for Pastor Ganesh Kalloo as he leads the congregation in worship and outreach.

21 Pray for Steve Carpenter as he moves to Harrisonburg to begin work as the VMC Conference Coordinator. Pray also for Conference Minister Owen Burkholder as he prepares to focus more on leadership development.

28 Several congregations in Virginia Mennonite Conference are in the process of searching for youth ministers. Pray that God would call people to fill these positions. Thank God for those who minister to the youth in your congregation.

For to us a child is born, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

Announcements

Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly and Missions Festival will be held June 12-14, 2002, at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va.

Eastern Mennonite High School has opened a search to fill the position of Principal on July 1, 2003. Interested persons should contact: Principal Search Committee, Eastern Mennonite High School, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA, 22802, search@emhs.net, 540-432-4502.

Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va., seeks a quarter- to third-time Youth Pastor beginning January 1, 2003. Contact Trissels Mennonite Church, P.O. Box 549, Broadway, VA, 22815, 540-896-7289, trisselsmc@juno.com.

On Saturday, December 7, from 9 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., 20% of all sales at the **Ten Thousand Villages** store in the Dayton Farmer's Market will benefit the medical ministry of Dr. Omar and Dolores Beiler in Jamaica.

Friendship Community, a non-profit Christian ministry supporting people with developmental disabilities, based in Lititz, Pa., is seeking a CEO to provide visionary leadership for a program serving 135 residents. Friendship Community is affiliated with Mennonite Health Services and Lancaster Conference. Resumes can be sent to Dan Hess, 1848 Charter Lane, Lancaster, PA, 17601 or dhess@lmasystems.com.

A book of minutes from Virginia Mennonite Conference delegate meetings from 1981 through 2002 is being compiled. Cost is yet to be determined. If you would like to order one, please contact Jill Landis at 540-434-9727 or jill.landis@vmconf.org by December 31.

Mennonite Relief Center, Hinton, Va., is collecting relief kits to stock the empty warehouses at Mennonite Central Committee. Relief kits provide valuable supplies to thousands of families traumatized by war and natural disasters. You are encouraged to assemble a kit and take it to either the Mennonite Relief Center, Hinton, Va., or the Virginia Mennonite Conference Center, 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, Va., by

December 10. A list of contents for the kit is available at www.mcc.org/respond/kits/relief_kits.html. For more information, contact Leon Rhodes, director of the Mennonite Relief Center at 540-867-9751.



Travis Kisamore, Harrisonburg, Va., is beginning a six-month assignment with Youth Evangelism Service (YES) in Det Udom and Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand. He is a member of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Kristin Rawls, Cary, N.C., is beginning a three-year assignment with Mennonite Central Committee in Mozambique as a community AIDS coordinator. She is a member of Raleigh Mennonite Church, Raleigh, N.C.



Virginia Showalter, Linville, Va., is beginning a two-year MCC assignment as a housing case worker in Washington, D.C. She is a member of Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.

Leadership Updates

Quinn Aeschliman was licensed as Associate Pastor at Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church, Chesapeake, Va., October 20, 2002.

Mauricio Chenlo was licensed as Youth Pastor and Director of the Jubilee Peace Center at Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church, November 3, 2002.

