

## Service and celebration intertwine in Jamaica

When our family began discussing a celebration for the 50th anniversary of our parents, Dan and Marge Graber, family time together was a high priority. We felt that the best way to do this was to go somewhere where none of us would have the responsibility of meals and cleaning. Since Jeanne and Ross had been to Jamaica on vacation and recommended it highly, this was approved as a location.

Dan and Marge have had a strong history of voluntary service during their marriage and Dan especially felt that a service project should be part of our celebration. The rest of us thought that this might be the only way to get Dan to go along with the plan! Since none of us had connections in Jamaica, and Peter knew that VMBM did, he contacted them to find out what might be possible. We wanted to do a project that would be helpful to the local church, and not cause more work for them—something where our presence would not cause problems for their ministry and mission. We hoped to work with them to fulfill a goal they had set.

After discussions with VMBM staff and leaders in Jamaica, it was decided that we would participate in the building of a parsonage for the Salter's Hill Mennonite Church. This had already been in the planning stage and the church there was willing to plan their work day to coordinate with our schedule. The local church did the preparation work, gathered the supplies and planned the day. We brought along a financial contribution to assist with purchasing materials.

Our family followed a van full of workers from the Ocho Rios area on a "short cut" through the mountains to the Salter's Hill church. We enjoyed seeing the villages and people along the road and the journey that tourists rarely make. We also enjoyed walking the half mile when a washout in the road prevented our bus from continuing.

When we arrived at the church, the trenches had already been dug for the foundation and the bricks,

stones, and cement blocks were piled around the church. We met the pastor and his wife, a previous pastor of the church and his wife, and various other Jamaican church people. After brief introductions, we were given our assignments and work began in earnest. We tied together rebar, bent the rebar, measured the rebar, carried the rebar and tried to follow instructions. Not being well accustomed to the heat (nor to the physical labor for some of us), we were not nearly as efficient as the local crew. They were understanding and provided drinks and fruit through the morning to sustain us.

By mid-morning, the men began mixing the cement and we provided the bodies for the cement bucket lines. As bucket brigadiers, we enjoyed the times when the buckets were stopped for discussions about where to pour next or the consistency of the mix. Although visions of cement pouring out of a big truck directly into the trenches kept recurring in my mind, it was actually a very efficient process that they had arranged. We finished the first large mix of cement and broke for lunch.

The ladies of the church had made a very nice meal of chicken, rice and peas, dumplings, and breadfruit for us and we ate well. During the break our children started to talk more with some of the local children and toys were shown off and hand tricks were exchanged. This made it much easier in the afternoon



Courtesy of Mary Graber

The Graber children and grandchildren worked with Jamaican brothers and sisters to lay the foundation for Donovan and Maxine Smith's house in Salter's Hill.

**"It was good for us to work together as a family and to do something to help others."**

# Moving into the future

There is a time to join hearts and a time to part ways.

Virtually every Mennonite in the United States had to think about the question of identity in the process of forming the Mennonite Church USA. For some it was a very simple exercise. For others, it was complex and disconcerting. While the majority decided to join together, for some it has become the time for grieving and separation.

As an agency, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions also had to consider what it is and what it represents for the diverse Mennonite constituency. The discussion has instilled new energy and life into the outlook for the future. At a time when so much is under review and realignment, VMBM has chosen to abide by two basic organizational premises:

1. VMBM will retain local governance and
2. VMBM will seek collaborative relationships with like-minded groups.

As a result of this decision, clarity was also attained pertaining to core values and expected outcomes, both being foundational to VMBM ministries:



David D. Yoder  
President of VMBM

1. Core values are identified in a Personal Covenant for all personnel in which the basis for belief is declared to be the Bible as the reliable authority from God for faithful living. Traditional understandings of truth have thus been confirmed. The more complete summary of beliefs is the Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective.

2. Expected outcomes for VMBM are to address the whole person in ministries, and to keep the formation of local faith communities at the heart of every endeavor of education, social service, leader development, and witness.

Because of these positions, VMBM will stand as an option for any Anabaptist congregation that wants to be engaged in mission. As relationships strengthen our personal faith journeys, so being associated with others for mission, fellowship, and accountability also enriches congregations.

This is the time for VMBM to join hearts with all who are serious about participating in God's work in the world. It is to this end that VMBM commits itself in this new era of global opportunity. And it is this opportunity that compels VMBM to partner with those who, in Christ's name, are ready to share in what God desires to accomplish through His faithful followers.



Rachel Smith

## VMBM, EMM hold Albania consultation

Representatives from Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, PA, met in Harrisonburg on November 26 for a consultation on their collaborative work in Albania. The group included missions leaders and missionaries who have recently returned from Albania. The meeting closed with prayer and anointing of those who sensed a call to be used of the Lord to share the vision for God's work in Albania.

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# Discipleship training for the Italian family

November 21 was a special day for our family. Floyd, Greg, Jenny and I drove to Washington, D.C., and boarded a plane. Our destination? Palermo, Sicily. For the children, it was the first time they returned for a visit since we left the field four and a half years ago.

For Floyd and I, we were on a mission board assignment as teachers for the Discipleship Training School held quarterly for the Mennonite Churches in Sicily. We were asked to teach on the family, one week of two-hour sessions each evening (8:30-10:30 p.m.). It was challenging to formulate the course according to cultural needs and differences in the Italian language complete with syllabus and overheads.

Some of our topics included, What is marriage?, understanding needs of men and women, defining our differences, confrontation, conflict resolution, communication, needs of children, and parenting. Approximately 50 people attended the sessions, many of them couples, as well as some singles.

For our family, it was a delightful time to rekindle relationships with old friends and families among

Courtesy of Janet Blosser



Franca and Concetto Pensati (R), the first members of the Shalom Congregation of Brancaccio, were present for all of the sessions on the family, led by Floyd and Janet Blosser (L) of Harrisonburg, VA.

whom we had lived and worked. We thoroughly enjoyed Italian hospitality. The children re-established relationships with old friends and re-learned their Italian.

For Floyd and me, it was especially exciting to see the Italian pastors taking leadership and seeing the churches move ahead with vitality and vision.

We spent our last day in Rome with newly appointed missionaries Trace and Kristin Oberholtzer, finishing up our evening with a delightful pasta meal with an appetizer of octopus!

• Janet Blosser

## Service and celebration continued from pg. 1

to get both groups of children to work together in forming lines for returning buckets, carrying water and other parts of the project. We had thought that our children would fade by the afternoon, but I think they all worked better after lunch when they were working together with other children.

We did more cement work after lunch and by the time we dumped the last bucket, we were all ready to stop. Unfortunately, we had to leave very quickly after that because of our bus schedule. We wished that we could have done some visiting with our new friends after the project.

I think the day was important to our family for many reasons. It was good for us to work together as a family and to do something to help others. It was good for our children to see Mennonites and Christians from other cultures who are active in their churches, working together and living their faith. It was good for us to see that different ways to accomplish things work well. It was good for us to see people who are happy and gracious and serving the Lord

while living with less material resources than we do. It was good for our children to see that the Jamaica you see from the tourist sites is not the whole story.

One interesting thing for me during the day was hearing the story of how the water system was put in for the village with the help of the Heatwoles many years ago. I attended Eastern Mennonite High School in 1973-74 and several of the Heatwole children were attending at the same time. We heard stories of Jamaica and their time there from them. Our lives and stories all intertwine. We hope that our lives will twine again with the people we met very briefly on a beautiful Jamaican Saturday on Salter's Hill.

• Mary Graber

Courtesy of Mary Graber



The Graber bucket brigadiers!



# Partners

## short-term service opportunities



### Albania

Work with youth and children  
July 2002  
2 weeks

Teach English  
9-12 months

Teach computer skills  
9-12 months

### Atmore, AL

Houseparents at group home.  
Experience working with children who  
have behavior disorders is desired.

### Baltimore, MD

Maintenance on school  
April 7-13, 2002  
1 week

### Belize

Evangelism and work team  
July 23-August 8, 2002  
2 weeks

### Haiti

Work team  
February 2002  
1 week

### Harrisburg, PA

Maintenance work  
June 2002  
3 weeks

### Italy

Teach English  
9-12 months

### Jamaica

Teach Vacation Bible School  
July 2002  
2 to 3 weeks

Special education teacher at  
Maranatha School for the Deaf  
2 years

### Kenya

Evangelism and work team  
July 2002  
3 weeks



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# in Mission

Paraguay  
Restoration and remodeling  
January to April 2002  
10 days

Carl River, MS  
Evangelism Bible School among  
Indigenous Americans  
May or June 2002  
2 weeks

Philadelphia, PA  
Service in the inner city  
June to August 2002  
12 weeks

Puerto Rico  
Work team  
June or July 2002  
10 days - 2 weeks

South Africa  
Work team and support  
to the local church  
August 2002  
2 weeks

## Trinidad

Team to work with worship  
leading, drama, and youth  
June to August 2002  
2-3 months

Music and worship leading  
training  
6-8 months

Teach computer skills  
9-12 months

Mentor young pastors  
1-2 years



When our youth group arrived at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica last summer, we stayed mostly segregated from the deaf children. We didn't know their language, and they didn't know ours. It wasn't too long, however, before they began to give us name signs, and we tried our best to communicate. The students were very friendly and patient and tried to make sure we understood what was being said. This was an amazing experience because, although we didn't know sign language very well, we were still able to communicate with the children.

Our relationships with the children changed drastically throughout the course of the week spent at Maranatha. We played soccer with them, ate ice cream with them, rode the seesaws, tried our best to talk with them, led them in chapel, and, best of all, became their friends. They taught me to be patient, satisfied with what I have, to appreciate life, and to always fully depend on God. I'll never forget them. They have so many lessons to teach with their hands through their signing, and I feel privileged to have gotten the chance to learn.

This trip was a life-changing experience for me, thanks to the group of which I was a part, the leaders and my congregation who provided me with the opportunity, and the Jamaicans who taught me so much. The most vivid memories that fill my mind are simple: smiles of the children, learning sign language, reggae music, my youth group, beauty, fresh pineapple, Jamaican culture, life's lessons, God's presence, mission work.

• Bridgett Campbell

## Partners in Mission

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# Harmonia Sacra Sing celebrates 100 years



Jim Bishop

Hymns from the Harmonia Sacra have been sung at Weavers Mennonite Church on New Years Day for one hundred years.

It hasn't missed a beat in one hundred years.

On New Year's Day, 2002, participants celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the annual "Harmonia Sacra" sing, using the oldest book of English hymns in continuous use to the present day.

The book was first published in 1832 in Singers Glen,

VA, by Joseph Funk (1778-1862).

The sanctuary of Weavers Mennonite Church west of Harrisonburg was full to overflowing as some 460 voices united in stirring, four-part a cappella har-

mony. This year's program was expanded to include an afternoon session devoted to presentations on the origins of the Harmonia Sacra, Funk's life and the history of the Weavers singing.

First known as the "old folks singing," the first gathering was held on Jan. 1, 1903 at the Weavers church with 22 persons present. It became an all-day event with a huge meal served at noon. In 1952, the 50th anniversary, the name was changed to the "Harmonia Sacra Singing." The singing was postponed twice because of the flu – 1919 and 1929 – and once due to inclement weather, in 1971. Only once was the singing held at a location other than Weavers – at the Bank Mennonite Church near Dayton in 1924.

According to secretary Jan Showalter, about a third of the 461 persons at the 100th anniversary singing were attending for the first time. In addition to local residents, persons came from 10 other states as far west as Iowa.

As selections were announced and strains of vigorous praise ascended from the Weavers sanctuary, long-time Harmonia Sacra promoter Gerald R. Brunk observed, "Not only is God being honored here, but I believe Joseph Funk would be well pleased."

• Jim Bishop

## Moving forward, glancing back Huntington Mennonite Church 50th anniversary

Pastor Ed Bontrager directed the congregation's attention to the date "September 9, 1951" on the decorative panel behind him. That is the date Huntington became an independent congregation and the reason the gathering celebrated a golden anniversary with commemorative services for eleven weeks from September to November.

"In a way it's a misnomer," Bontrager told the congregation. Before 1951, Huntington was already a thriving mission.

"Hopefully we are still a mission station," Bontrager commented later. "Just because a church becomes 'established' shouldn't mean it is no longer doing mission in the community."

From the stories told during the November 17-18 homecoming weekend, it was clear the congregation's beginnings shaped the history and character of the present church body. Much of the current vision, as articulated by Bontrager and others, is focused on enlarging and extending that outreach.

The congregation was officially organized in weekend meetings September 7-9, 1951. But years before that, in the 1920s, the eventual congregation was formed as an outpost of outreach to the heavily industrialized, but still young city of Newport News,

by the colony of Mennonites at Denbigh, 30 minutes away in what was then an agrarian Warwick County.

The group first formed as Martha Brunk talked and listened to the people she met while selling produce and sandwiches. Soon she made a point of visiting people regularly and started making the trip for that purpose. At one point Warwick River Mennonite Church, her congregation, voted to reimburse her six cents a mile for the use of her car. Bible studies were organized and in 1928 an afternoon Sunday School was established in a house on 34th Street. Warwick River sent workers and the superintendents, Henry Nice and Henry Shenk.

In 1936, the Virginia Mission Board took over the work. Warwick River continued to supply the Sunday School teachers. The Mission Board supplied and supported the pastor or superintendent for the work and assumed the financial responsibility. Thus, the congregation in 1951 was organized from a Virginia Mission Board mission.

Those who were there in the earliest days are now gone, but the congregation that met in the small church building on Huntington Avenue from 1938 to 1971 was well represented during the homecoming weekend. The fiery sermons of Andy Hartzler and the

Moving forward continued on back page

# February 2002 Prayer Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by the Harrisonburg office of Mennonite Foundation, Suzanne Kennedy, Southeast Regional Representative.</p> <p><i>If you would like to sponsor one or more months of the prayer calendar, contact David D. Yoder at 540-434-9727 or 1-800-707-5535.</i></p>	<p><b>4</b> This week a Partners in Mission team is putting a roof on a church building in Haiti. Pray for safety for all of the workers as they do this task. Pray also that good relationships will be built between the brothers and sisters as they work together.</p>	<p><b>5</b> Allen Umble and Norma Teles will be traveling to Bari, Italy, to visit Willard &amp; Eva Eberly, Mediterranean regional directors, sometime this month. This will provide a much needed break from their assignments in Lezhe, Albania.</p>	<p><b>6</b> Earl &amp; Kathy Moyer will have a busy morning teaching vocational classes at the Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica. Pray that God will give them insight and patience as they relate to the students.</p>	<p><b>7</b> The World Mission Prayer Fellowship meets today at noon at Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. Pray for Elaine Zook Barge as she gives the latest update on MCC activities in Afghanistan.</p>	<p><b>1</b> Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network become official organizations today. May God work mighty acts through these structures!</p>	<p><b>2</b> Pray for the pastors, worship leaders, and others from the Northern and Harrisonburg districts of Virginia Conference who are participating in a seminar on worship today.</p>
<p><b>3</b> Pray for the churches participating in the Baltimore-Washington area City on a Hill church expansion project. "Kick-off" events will be held this weekend at Washington Community Fellowship and at North Baltimore Mennonite Church.</p>	<p><b>11</b> Ask God to open the hearts and minds of individuals, families, and youth groups for the possibility of participating in a short-term missions trip this year. If God is speaking to you, contact VMBM soon.</p>	<p><b>12</b> Pray for the schools and college connected with Virginia Mennonite Conference. Thank God for His direction in the past for these institutions and ask for His guidance for administrators and teachers both now and in the future.</p>	<p><b>13</b> Stanley and Carol McMahon and their son, Alberto, will be terminating their missionary service in Sicily, Italy, in June. Pray for them in these final months of bringing closure to a meaningful period of their lives.</p>	<p><b>14</b> Love is kind and patient – never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails! Oh God, help us love others like this!</p>	<p><b>8</b> Pray for the VMBM board in session today and tomorrow. Pray for the presidential search committee as they seek leadership for VMBM, as David D. Yoder will retire in August.</p>	<p><b>9</b> Pray for Ramesh Jaimani in Trinidad with his very busy schedule as pastor, husband, father, and student at West Indies Theo. College. Pray also for the Jaimani family as they relate to the Charlottesville congregation, and as they balance school, work schedules, and family time.</p>
<p><b>10</b> Lonnie &amp; Teresa Yoder are relating to the Calvary and Ocho Rios Mennonite Churches in Jamaica this week. Pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire the Yoders and that the church members will hear God's voice.</p>	<p><b>18</b> Thank God that Kenny &amp; Stephanie Stoner and children are learning to know the Calvary Mennonite Church in Jamaica better and are relating to them. Ask God for His wisdom as they choose close friends, especially for their children.</p>	<p><b>19</b> The young adults of Virginia Conference are a valuable resource for the church. Pray for God's blessings on them as they make decisions, work in their professions, volunteer for the church and other organizations, and listen to God's call in their lives.</p>	<p><b>20</b> In Las Lomas, Trinidad, a group of five women are meeting weekly to study God's word. Margaret Keeler trained this leader and is training others. Thank God for this ministry and pray that God will touch many women and families through these Bible studies.</p>	<p><b>21</b> On Thursdays, Omar Beiler makes house calls to those who are unable to travel to the clinic in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. Ask God for protection as he travels and for him to have strength to minister to the very sick people he treats.</p>	<p><b>15</b> Pray that the seven new believers at Toritto, Italy, would grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and become strong disciples.</p>	<p><b>16</b> Mennonite Central Committee and the Virginia Mennonite Conference Youth Office are sponsoring a workshop today on the military and Mennonite pacifism. Pray that God would speak to the pastors, youth sponsors, parents, and youth who attend.</p>
<p><b>17</b> Pray for the church in Termini, Italy, as they face the departure of Stanley and Carol McMahon. Praise God for Toni Ceraulo, an Italian pastor taking the McMahons' place. They have been assisting for two years.</p>	<p><b>25</b> Pray for safety for Willard and Eva Eberly, Mediterranean regional directors, as they travel to Florence, Italy. They are visiting Trace &amp; Kristin Oberholtzer, who are studying the Italian language.</p>	<p><b>26</b> Richard Keeler is teaching "A Survey of the NT" at the West Indies Theo. College in Trinidad. Pray that this course will ignite new life into both him and the students and that their faith would be strengthened by absorbing God's word.</p>	<p><b>27</b> Thank God for the dedicated and gifted office and field personnel of VMBM as they work creatively and relationally to carry out their ministries.</p>	<p><b>28</b> As Dolores Beiler shops at the market and runs other errands, she meets many people in Santa Cruz, Jamaica. Thank God for her friendly manner and caring heart. May the people she meets see Christ's love in her.</p>	<p><b>22</b> Pray for Richie Tyson, Derrick Samuda, Ivy Dacres, and Douglas Senior, officers of Jamaica Mennonite Church, as they make preparations for the JMC annual conference next weekend.</p>	<p><b>23</b> This weekend is the Virginia Conference Ministry Retreat. Pray that the pastors and spouses who attend will be strengthened in their roles. May they return with renewed skills to manage the myriad of triangles in their ministry and personal journeys.</p>

**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

**Colossians 3:14 (NIV)**

# Announcements

**"Peace and the Military,"** a workshop for pastors, youth sponsors, parents, and youth, will be held February 16, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, VA. Titus Peachey and Conrad Moore of the MCC Peace office will speak on issues surrounding youth, non-resistance, and the military. To make your reservation, contact Kimberlee Greenawalt at 540-434-9727 or greenawalk@vmconf.org. Sponsored by the VMC Youth Office and the Peace Committee of the Nurture Commission.

Attention, ladies! **Matilda Kipfer**, longtime Women's Aglow speaker, will speak at Windhaven Church, Mt. Jackson, VA, on March 16, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch will be provided. For more information call 540-896-2951 or 540-740-2989 or look in next month's Connections.

**World Day of Prayer** is March 1. This year's theme is "Challenged to Reconcile." The material in the World Day of Prayer packet is written by the women of Romania. To order the packet, call Church Women United Distribution Center, 1-800-298-5551 ext. 2347. Ask for item #1801, price \$2.75 + S&H.

**Conquest House, Inc.**, a Christian ministry in Washington, D.C., that assists ex-offenders with reintegrating into society, is seeking two persons to serve on their Board of Directors. If you have a heart for prisoners, ex-offenders, at-risk youth, and their families, contact Louis Jones, Director at 202-723-2014, ext 10 or cormdc@erols.com.

**Moving forward**  
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shepherding leadership of Lloyd Weaver were recalled fondly. Those who were children at the time remembered, sometimes tearfully, how they were befriended and helped by the people who came in from the farms in Denbigh. Others told of handing out tracts downtown and singing in street corner quartets.

In 1972 the congregation met for the first time in a new and much larger building on Harpersville Road. Newport News had annexed Warwick County in 1958 and downtown was slowly dying as the population center moved northwest towards Denbigh. In the move the former Huntington Avenue Mennonite Church dropped the Avenue from its name.

The congregation continued to welcome members that had no previous connection to Mennonites.

The **Mission Fellowship Tour** to Italy, Switzerland, and eastern Germany, originally scheduled for March 28 to April 11, has been rescheduled for October 2002. Co-sponsored by Eastern Mennonite Missions and VMBM, the tour is intended to introduce North Americans to missions and national churches on the continent of Europe. For more information, contact VMBM at 540-434-9727 or 1-800-707-5535.

**Living Biblically in Today's World**, a conference on Biblical interpretation, will be held April 5-6 at Harrisonburg (VA) Mennonite Church, beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, and going through 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. Topics will include Thy Word is Truth; Reading Scripture Through Admitted Perspectives; Jesus: the Living Word; Reading from the Same Page; and Guided by the Living Word. Sponsored by the Faith & Life Commission of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

The **MCC beef canner** will be at the Mennonite Relief Center, Hinton, VA, March 4-8. Virginia Conference Day is March 5, but you are welcome to help on any day. For more information contact Leon Rhodes at 540-867-9751.

**Could your business** help to underwrite the April issue of *Mission Connections*? If you want to support missions in this way, contact Gloria Lehman, VMBM Director of Public Relations, at 540-434-9727 or e-mail lehman@vmbm.org. The rates are reasonable and the results are long-lasting!

During homecoming, Ilse Deel recalled how she and her husband Jeff tried every other church on Harpersville Road before being told by a friend about the Mennonites. The congregation laughed when she explained she wasn't completely sure before coming whether Mennonites used electricity or not.

Glance at Huntington's phone listing and you will find some names that are traditionally Mennonite such as Yoder and Lehman, but you will also find names such as Thornton, Taylor, Allen and Alfonso. The contributions and heritage of the families and individuals of Huntington were celebrated by readings written and delivered on Sunday mornings by Esther Mable Yoder during the eleven weeks of celebration.

• Steve Fannin

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