

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

August 2003
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Centro Koinonia

After six months of prayerful searching, a suitable facility has finally been found for the budding house fellowship that met in Jason and Donna Martin's apartment for more than a year. It's the lower level of a villa located on the southern edge of Bari, Italy, toward Capurso, where Phil and Marcia Lehman live. The private garden entrance is inviting and the meeting room is attractive and spacious. The auxiliary rooms are suitable for a variety of activities envisioned by the church planting team. Its almost "homey" atmosphere lends itself meaningfully to the name chosen for this new church—Centro Koinonia, place of fellowship and belonging.

The dedication activities on June 1 filled the entire day. A busload of 18 people from the Salerno church joined in the festivities. A group of 20 (including six pastors and their wives) made the ten-hour trip from the Mennonite congregations of the Palermo province. Their presence and participation made our small group feel connected to a larger body.

The day began with a worship service, followed by a delicious meal of typical regional foods at a nearby restaurant. The afternoon dedication service drew more local friends and believers until all of the 110 chairs were in use! In all, representatives from 13 churches came to give their blessing and best wishes for the new beginning here at Bari.

But the greatest joy was the presence of friends who do not yet know Jesus personally! In the dedication message, Francesco Picone, president of the Italian Mennonite Church, reminded us that God no longer dwells in temples made with human hands, but

continued on pg. 2



Phil Lehman



Gene Meiser

Men with a dream

For five years, Elwood Yoder and Myron Blosser dreamed about taking a group of students to retrace the Lewis and Clark trail for the expedition's bicentennial. In March 2002, Mr. Yoder e-mailed Mr. Blosser, who was finishing his work at Harrisonburg High School, about pursuing such an endeavor. Mr. Blosser joyfully responded, saying, "Ah, a man with a dream... I love it."

When Mr. Blosser joined the faculty of Eastern Mennonite High School in July 2002, preparations for the trip were already in progress. The two men set the dates for the trip and recruited fellow faculty members to help prepare a mission statement and compose the following goals for the trip:

- to discover the historical setting and geographical terrain of the original Lewis and Clark trip;
- to explore the need for sustainability and focused management of our nation's natural resources;
- to work together in faith development and community building.

The EMHS Corps of Discovery consisted of 22 students and 8 teachers who left Harrisonburg on the morning of June 4, bound for the Pacific Ocean. A curriculum guided their journey and students studied subjects pertaining to different stops along the trip.

continued on pg. 6

The EMHS Corps of Discovery enjoyed a three-day canoe trip on the Missouri River during Lewis and Clark 2003.

Another cloud of witnesses

The image comes from Hebrews 12, you might recall. The verse came to mind when I saw the plaque in the foyer of the Chestnut Ridge Mennonite Church in Ohio. Inscribed thereon were the names of about 30 charter members of a congregation begun 50 years ago this year. I knew them all.

That has been “my” church and I have known, more or less, all its history. I grew up there. I whispered with my friends in the back row. I brought my dates there on Sunday evenings. I experienced Holy Spirit conviction there. I accepted the Lord there and was baptized. I tried my first sermon. I’ve been blessed and sent forth from that congregation to other places in the world, all the while surrounded by a “cloud of witnesses.” On September 20-21, I’ll join Chestnut Ridge to remember 50 years, and anticipate as many more as the Lord sees fit.

We’re in the business of creating “clouds of witnesses.” Congregations, in all their strengths and weaknesses, serve as illustrations and inspiration of

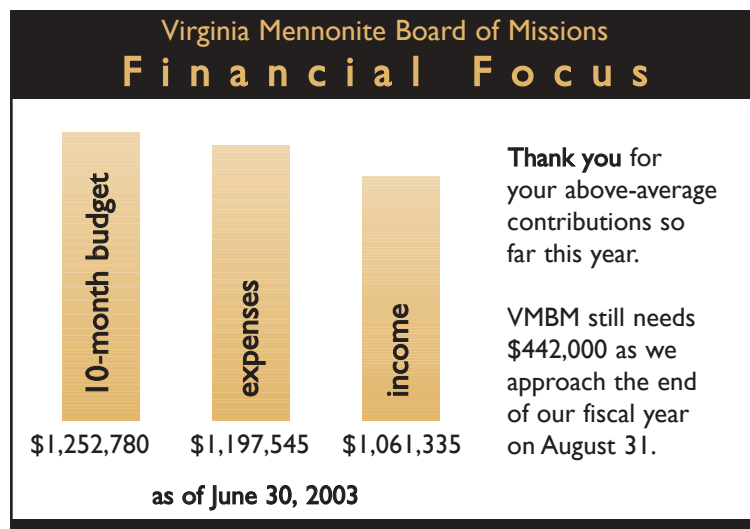


Loren Horst
President of VMBM

faith. They nurture the young, empower the middle in age, and bid fond farewell to those dying. All the while, congregations welcome any and all whom the Lord may bring. They become, as it were, “clouds of witnesses” to the life of faith in Jesus in the world today. Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Virginia Mennonite Conference have started about 100 of them around the world in the last several decades. We’d like to multiply 100 more.

Not long ago I joined the Ridgeway Mennonite “cloud of witnesses” as they honored God and remembered the too-short life of their pastor, Richard Headings. I was inspired. I was comforted. I was challenged to “run the race with perseverance.” And now, Richard Headings joins many of those of the Chestnut Ridge charter membership in another “cloud of witnesses,” cheering the rest of us as we successfully complete the race marked out for us. By God’s grace, we will do so.

Loren Horst



—“**Centro Koinonia**” continued from pg. 1 —

rather in the hearts and lives of those who follow Jesus Christ as Lord—a radical affirmation in this religious culture of grand cathedrals and sacred places.

The day ended in true Mediterranean style, enjoying *focaccia* and other delicacies prepared by the ladies of the church and accompanied by much animated conversation and warm fellowship. Centro Koinonia truly exemplified its name that day! Pray that it would offer authentic fellowship and belonging in Jesus to the people of Bari.

• Eva Eberly
Mediterranean Regional Associate
Bari, Italy

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Making a difference

I can still remember the phone call I received about a year ago at the end of my senior year in college. I had been asked to come to Jamaica and work at a deaf school. Although Jamaica would not have been my first choice as a place to do voluntary service, I felt called. I was not going to pass up an opportunity to interact with children of another culture, especially deaf children. So, here I am in Jamaica, almost a year later, alive and well.

I cannot begin to explain how wonderful it has been to build relationships with the children and youth at Maranatha School for the Deaf and in the surrounding community. At first, creating relationships seemed almost impossible, because I could understand neither sign language nor the patois, which is an African-English creole. The communication barrier was overwhelming.

Somehow God had a way of breaking that barrier quickly without me ever really noticing. Before I knew it I was signing songs in morning chapel and even having conversations with the students using sign language. Learning the patois has not been as easy, but it has also not been as necessary. The community children usually laugh when they hear me trying to talk like them. It warms my heart to see a smile on the face of any of these children. So I will keep on trying to speak their language as long as it makes them smile, even if they are only making fun of me.

When I first arrived here, most of my thoughts and feelings were about family and friends at home. Although I still miss family and friends, this place is starting to feel a little more like home. Two

years seemed like a long commitment at first, but sometimes it hardly seems long enough to make a real difference.

I hope that some of the things I am doing will really touch the people here. Anything from pushing the little ones

on the swings to giving someone a ride into the nearest town can make a difference and brighten someone's day. When I asked two of the older deaf students if they wanted to come to Negril with me, their eyes lit up immediately and one of

them signed what would translate into "never touched." He had never been to that part of the island before. Needless to say, they were quick to accept my invitation. I have enjoyed giving the Jamaican children opportunities like this one to see their country.

I have already learned so much in the short time I have been here, and I want to spend the remainder of my time wisely. I only need to ask God for guidance. He has brought me this far and I trust He will continue to work in my life so that I can continue to help others.

• Jesse Bergey
St. Elizabeth, Jamaica



Harold Bergey

Jesse Bergey enjoys spending time with the students at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica.

Missionaries in the Caribbean

Paul and Esther Kniss are serving with the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago as mentors for Pastor Lalman John and his wife, Rafina, leaders of the Hope Mennonite Church in Esperanza. The Knisses will serve for a year in this capacity, taking a break to serve in India from November through February.

Paul and Esther were in Trinidad for two other short-term assignments, and are well-loved and respected for their Christian commitment and compassion. They are members of Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.



Philip Rhodes began a year-long assignment in Jamaica in July. He will assist with vocational classes at Maranatha School for the Deaf and relate to the Mennonite churches in St. Elizabeth. He will focus on youth ministry, particularly with boys in recreation and Bible study. Philip has completed two years at Bridgewater College, and is a member of Dayton (Va.) Mennonite Church.

Conference Asse

Following Jesus, Discerning the

What a joy it was to be part of VMC's Assembly and International Fair held at James Madison University, June 12-14. Three hundred and seventy people registered for Assembly, including 149 delegates and Joseph and Beena Sookram, Fraternal Delegates from the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago. We participated in a time of church business, exalted God in our worship, studied scripture together, and chose from a dozen workshops.

We are grateful for the efforts of Sonya Eberly (Mt. Clinton) in anchoring the worship planning for this year's assembly. She recruited local musicians for pre-service and worship music—everything from men's a cappella to Italian guitar!

The preachers, Harry Jarrett (Harrisonburg), Rose Huyard (Mt. Vernon), and Glen Guyton (Calvary), worked the theme of following Jesus as illustrated in the first chapter of Mark. The call to fish for people was amply demonstrated with the fishing gear visuals

provided by Kathy Weaver Wenger (Springdale). The calls to commitment included commissioning for "continued fishing" and "getting dirty" in response to the example of Jesus.

Marion Bontrager, chair of the Bible Department of Hesston College, provided two agenda-setting Bible studies as he made the transitions from the Mark text to our situation. It was fascinating to hear references to Marion's presentations in other parts of the assembly.

Storytelling is always absorbing. To hear Chaiya Hadtasunern and Aranya Khoklasutchai (Hickory) speak of their call to be missionaries to the U. S. was deeply challenging. And S. J. "Nuck" Morris (Gospel Hill) brought tears to hearers as he noted the change in his life based on God's intervention for him.

Joe Longacher and Mark Wenger, Moderator and Assistant Moderator, skillfully led the delegates through six hours of business which included: accepting Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship as a member congregation; showing appreciation to J. David Yoder, outgoing Principal of Eastern Mennonite High School, where he has served for



Rose Huyard • speaker

Galen Lehman



Children's Activities

Rachel Smith

the past 22 years; unveiling a new book, "Reinventing Aging," written by Shirley Yoder Brubaker and others; affirming the Gift Discernment Committee's slate, including its nomination of Minister Steven Brown of Calvary Community Church as Assistant Moderator; and hearing from MC USA Executive Director Jim Schrag and Moderator Ervin Stutzman about Assembly in Atlanta.

Because the assembly was scheduled for the end of the school year for schools in the area, it was difficult to find planners for children's activities. We are thankful for the pre-planning work of Rachel Gerber (Harrisonburg) and Julie Haushalter (EMS) and the on-site coordination of Shirley Yoder Brubaker (Park View). Parents told us they had a hard time getting their children to leave for home.

It is a continuing challenge—translating the following Jesus theme from net-casting days to pressurized North American living. We must ever be following and always discerning!

• Owen Burkholder & Steve Carpenter



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Listening Committee reflections

As I reflect on this year's summer assembly there are several things that characterize the event for me as one who sat with the Listening Committee. The last several assembly sessions have had a rather heavy atmosphere about them due to the debates and actions around the issue of membership in the new Mennonite Church USA (and the underlying issue of homosexuality) and the consequent loss of congregations at both ends of the theological spectrum. This assembly, held in a lovely and commodious conference center at James Madison University, did not focus on "problems." One could sense that the delegate body felt the need for a quieter gathering that celebrated the unity of the conference. The theme of the assembly was "Following Jesus, Discerning the Times." The primary accent fell on the first part of the theme and took the form of a resounding call to take up the denominational objective to become a missional church. This was emphasized in the inspirational messages, Bible studies and business reporting. Our conference is energized by the challenge to be God's people in and for the world. Less emphasis came through on "discerning the times." Notable, however, was Marion Bontrager's

treatment of this topic in his Bible study, pointing out the all-pervasive power of sin in both the personal and social realms. Finally, the assembly placed a marker in time by hearing reflections from two of our prominent leaders, Glendon Blosser and Richard Showalter, who are completing long and effective ministries in conference leadership. At the same time the conference is giving priority to the development of future leaders. There are hopeful signs that Virginia Conference will continue as a strong part of Christ's body in the world.

• George R. Brunk III
Listening Committee Chair



Galen Lehman



S. J. "Nuck" Morris • storytelling

Rachel Smith



Galen Lehman

World Neighbors International Fair

World Neighbors far and near

No packing was needed for traveling to other countries during the "World Neighbors"

International Fair on Saturday afternoon at Conference Assembly. Travel was quick and easy for a few hours.

The Vietnamese Christian Fellowship, Falls Church, Va., brought a variety of delicacies and served them graciously. The Harrisonburg Mennonite Seekers Class displayed informative materials and tastes of Laotian foods. Chaiya Hadtasunern and Aranya Khoklasutchai, representing the Hmong ministry in Hickory, N. C., sold beautiful handmade Hmong craft items. Former missionaries to Albania, Trinidad, Italy, and Jamaica showed interesting items and delicious foods from each of

these locations of VMBM outreach.

The Shenandoah Alphorns presented authentic Swiss-German music with 12-foot long horns, playing in four-part harmony—a visual and auditory treat. Two Indonesian women performed traditional dances and songs, and Mike Eberly, Rick Picone, and Joshua Marin played Latino music on guitar and drums. The Northeast Community Choir sang Black Gospel music to conclude the afternoon.

Children enjoyed the henna painting and the games and crafts. There was something for everyone at the "World Neighbors" International Fair. The event was co-sponsored by NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center and VMBM.

• Gloria Lehman
VMBM Director of Public Relations

The house that was meant to be

Mumaw House, Pleasant View's newest community home, can only be described as "the house that was meant to be." Late last August, our realtor suggested that we look at the house at 293 Meyers Court in Broadway, Va. One quick look and we knew that this was a property made for us.

Over lunch that day, we discussed the possible use of this house and how we could serve people with disabilities who need homes. Imagine our surprise when we returned to the Regional Center and found two messages from Community Services Board, telling us that two people who needed our services would be funded. Each of these persons had been needing residential placement for a long time, as it was becoming increasingly difficult for their families to provide the necessary level of support. As each of us tried to absorb the occurrences over the preceding four hours, we came to the conclusion that God was indeed guiding us, and that this was definitely meant to be.

As we debated about a name for this house, it quickly became apparent that Pleasant View should honor the Mumaw family for their guidance and support over the years. John R. Mumaw had been instrumental in the founding of our agency many years ago, and many members of his family have served on Pleasant View's Board of Directors and various committees over the years. We have indeed been honored to have this family play an active part in Pleasant View's growth.

A little over four months later, on December 8,



Mumaw House is Pleasant View's newest community home.

2002, Mumaw House opened with its first two residents. We were fortunate to find a setting that we would have designed for ourselves. Various local groups helped to furnish the house, and we have been able to turn Mumaw House into a very beautiful home.

On December 18, with a houseful of family, friends, and neighbors, Mumaw House was dedicated by our pastor, Dave Gullman. During the fellowship time, we met neighbors, rejoiced with the families of our first residents, and praised God for this opportunity to provide a comfortable home in this wonderful setting. The residents quickly settled into being a family, and staff members have formed attachments with the individuals living there.

As I write this, I am surrounded by this family in this beautiful house, and I am amazed at how God guided us in this endeavor. Mumaw House was truly meant to be!

• Rosa Bare
Pleasant View, Inc.

—“Men with a dream” continued from pg. 1—

They studied sustainable agriculture, and had the opportunity to visit with several Indian tribes to discover the impact that the Lewis and Clark expedition made on the Indian cultures. They also did research on Jefferson's motives for sending Lewis and Clark to explore the Louisiana Territory.

Students completed daily assignments and readings and often created presentations and essays to be shared with the group. In the evenings, there was time for reflection and planning the next day's activities. Two of the highlights were a three-day canoe trip on the Missouri River and the opportunity to attend the fifth annual Lewis and Clark Symposium in Lewiston, Idaho.

Lewis and Clark 2003 received some media attention along the way, including an article in "USA Today" and interviews by three other newspapers and two TV news stations. You can check out the group's

travels at www.lewisandclark2003.net.

As our 28-day expedition is homeward bound, I reflect upon the impact that this trip has had upon my life. It has opened my eyes to a variety of issues like dam management and given me new appreciation for God's wonderful creation. This journey also taught me about God's providence. Many times we depended on the generosity of others by staying in three churches, two gyms, and numerous state parks.

In short, Lewis and Clark 2003 has been more than Mr. Blosser, Mr. Yoder, or I could have ever imagined. I am truly grateful to all who perpetuated this dream into being. It has been the trip of a lifetime for me, and I hope others will have an experience such as mine. I encourage you to be filled with joy and dream an impossible dream.

• Regina Wenger
Springdale Mennonite Church

August 2003 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

31 September represents a new church year for many congregations. Pray for Sunday school teachers, treasurers, council chairs, and others who will begin their work on behalf of your congregation.

3 Pray that new families will attend the family camp this week hosted by the Centro Koinonia congregation in Bari, Italy, as an outreach. Pray for resource persons Sergio & Graziella Crocivera who are leading sessions for parents.

10 Tom & Karen Yoder and family return to the States today following ministry in Kosova and visitation in Albania. Pray for clarity as VMBM and EMM plan for future expansion and placement of long-term missionaries in Kosova.

17 Jeff Kauffman, a recent graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, was ordained for ministry at Weavers Mennonite Church last Sunday. Pray for Jeff and the congregation during this time of transition.

24 Paul & Esther Kniss mentor Lalman & Rafina John, leaders of the Hope Mennonite Church in Esperanza, Trinidad. Pray for the Knisses and the Johns as they nurture and guide this young congregation in a Hindu village.

Monday

[Jesus said,] **“Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”**

Matthew 16:25 (NIV)

4 Pray for the staff, leaders, and participants in the LEAP (Learning, Exploring, and Participating) program as they finish up orientation and finalize last-minute details before traveling to Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe.

11 Pray for USA Regional Director Joe Bontrager as he represents VMBM at the Global Mission Consultation in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

18 Pray for Leon Zimmerman and his family as they serve with EMM in Albania for three months. The family will relate to the congregation in Lezhe and Leon will teach at the Albanian Bible Institute in Durres.

25 Pray for the persons who will be using the “Reinventing Aging” curriculum in a congregational setting this fall. Thank God for the work of the Health & Mutual Care Commission in developing this important material.

Tuesday

5 A Partners in Mission team leaves tomorrow for Mennonite World Conference. Pray that this experience of service may bless others and the participants on the team. Jill Landis leads the team.

12 Pray for the many people who are attending Mennonite World Conference in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, this week. May this be a joyful time of fellowship, worship, and learning with brothers and sisters from around the world.

19 Pray for wisdom for Urban Ministry Director Paul Godshall, District Chair John Bender, and the City on a Hill Committee as they meet in Durham, N.C., tomorrow evening to review progress on City on a Hill initiatives.

26 Pray for the Pastors’ Guild, a dozen ministers from four districts who meet monthly for fellowship. Clyde Kratz and Beryl Jantzi provide leadership. Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter will be speaking to them tomorrow.

Wednesday

Levi and June Weber sponsored this month’s prayer calendar. Their support of outreach ministries is deeply appreciated. Praise God for this witness among us.

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.

6 Pray for Maurita Eberly as she conducts music workshops for the children at Centro Koinonia’s family camp in Southern Italy this week. Pray also for safety and stamina as she returns to the U.S. later this month.

13 Paul Leaman has completed his first month as principal of Eastern Mennonite High School. Pray for wisdom, patience and strength as he deals with the many issues that will arise as students return to their classes this fall.

20 August 31 is the end of the fiscal year for VMC and VMBM. Meeting the financial needs this year is proving to be a challenge. Pray for the generosity of individuals and congregations.

27 This is Karen Brunk’s last month of service as nurse at the Joyland Clinic in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. Pray for God’s blessing on her as she bids farewell to the community she loves and returns to her home in Ohio.

Thursday

1 Pray for Lavonne Lehman as she leads a team of seven that leaves for Trinidad tomorrow. This Partners in Mission team will assist with Bible School at Diego Martin and Charleiville Mennonite churches.

8 Pray for USA Regional Director Joe Bontrager as he visits Breakthrough Ministries in South Africa. They are a partner in the Calvary Community Church Chesapeake church plant and the home church of church planter Flinn Ranchod.

15 Pray for Mabel Nelson as she takes on new responsibilities as principal of Warwick River Christian School. Many things have changed during the twelve years since she served as principal at WRCS.

22 Pray for the leaders of Harrisonburg and Northern Districts as they consider mutually beneficial models for pastoral oversight within their districts.

29 Steve Campbell arrived in Lushnje, Albania, a month ago to begin a one-year term of service. Pray for Steve as he learns the Albanian language and as he begins teaching Heather, Alecia, and Jyrell Hess.

Friday

2 The Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago holds their Annual General Meeting this weekend. Thank God for the good year of witnessing that the congregations had and pray for His guidance during the year ahead.

9 Pray for Conference Minister Owen Burkholder as he and his wife, Ruth Ann, drive back from Alberta, Canada, where he was the featured speaker at his home congregation’s 100th anniversary celebration.

16 Pray for the family of Dick Headings and the Ridgeway Mennonite Church community as they grieve Pastor Dick’s passing on June 26. Pray for Wayne North as he serves as interim pastor.

23 The Jamaica Mennonite Conference youth camps are being held now. Pray that the youth and counselors from across the island will be spiritually renewed during this time of Bible study, fun activities, and worship.

30 Pray for Chaiya Hadtaunserm and Aranya Khoklatsutchai, who hold classes each Saturday in Hickory, N.C., to teach Hmong literacy to Hmong youth, who speak their native language but have not learned to read and write it.

Saturday

Announcements

Caregiver Series workshops are offered at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community on August 27 (Facing New Challenges as Caregivers) and September 4 (Care Options for Senior Citizens). Caregiver Series is free and open to the public. Call Peggy Brubaker at 540-564-3662 for reservations.

Harrisonburg Mennonite Church is seeking a full-time youth director to serve the church's high school population of 80 youth. This person shall exhibit Christian faith and maturity, reflecting Anabaptist values and beliefs. Preference will be given to candidates with youth ministry training and experience. The position will be open September 1, 2003. Applicants may send a resume and references to HMC, c/o Director of Youth Ministries Search Committee, 1552 S. High Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 or contact Beryl Jantzi at 540-434-4489 or bjantzi@aol.com.



Mabel R. Nelson has been appointed as the new principal at Warwick River Christian School, Newport News, Va. She began teaching at WRCS in 1971, and served as Principal and Administrator from 1973 until 1991. She returned in 1994 to teach kinder-

garten, continuing in that role through the past school year. Mabel is a member of Providence Mennonite Church.

Patchwork Pantry's cupboards are bare! Due to a decrease in USDA foods, Patchwork Pantry needs to purchase more non-USDA food from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. Our funds are running low! Will you consider helping in one or more of these ways?

- Hold a food drive. Call Dick Petonke at 540-289-6379 for more information and for food pick-up.
- Bring fresh produce to Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg on Wednesday evenings between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m.
- Send money to help purchase food to Patchwork Pantry, 70 S. High St. Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

A book of minutes from Virginia Mennonite Conference delegate meetings from 1981 through 2002 is available for purchase. Cost is \$15. Contact Jill Landis at 540-434-9727 or jill.landis@vmconf.org.

Pastoral Transitions

Richard (Dick) Headings, lead pastor of Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., passed away Thursday evening, June 26, at the age of 62. Although he was first diagnosed with cancer in March 2001, Dick continued to serve the congregation until



April 30, 2003. Dick and his wife, Dorothy, moved to Harrisonburg in July 2000 from Kansas, where he had served as conference minister for the South Central Mennonite Conference. Previously he pastored the Lebanon Mennonite Church in Oregon for 17 years.

Dick gave leadership in bringing together a focus for the congregational purpose statement. His open sharing of the love of Christ, enthusiastic leadership and love of people will be greatly missed by all Ridgeway attendees, as well as those in the nearby Ridgeway neighborhood. Dick's time with Ridgeway was short, but his ministry will continue.

Cynthia A. Guyton was ordained for ministry at Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va., July 13.

Glen A. Guyton was ordained for ministry at Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va., July 13.

Nan H. Williams was ordained for ministry at Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va., July 13.

Robert L. Williams was ordained for ministry at Calvary Community Church, Hampton, Va., July 13.

Lawrence R. Yoder was licensed for Special Ministries in Harrisonburg District, July 13.

