

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

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Spreading the love of Jesus in Albania

God is good and His goodness endures forever. God has been very good to me and I can see Him moving the mountains and breaking the walls. In prior years I organized the children's camp with missionaries from the Good News Church here in Lezhe, Albania, but this year I was alone. Thank God for the YES team that was like my right hand, even when they didn't know the language very well or understand what I had in mind.

We had two camps, the first for ages 8 to 11 with an attendance of 20 children. The theme was "Trust in God," with stories of Joshua and Gideon. We had a good balance of fun and teaching about God during the camp. When asked to share what the camp meant to her, one young girl said, "It was a time to learn to trust in God and to have fun."

One thing that distinguished this camp is that the children wrote prayers. We had a table with pencils and paper and they would go there and write prayers and throw them in a bag. It was lovely to see them write these prayers. In the end we had many beautiful prayers that I believe came from the bottom of their hearts.

The second camp was for children from 11 to 14 years old, and we had 24 children in attendance. The theme was "How to live in God's family." Robert Cook from England taught the Bible lessons and Joao Chagas, leader of the YES team, taught the moral lessons. God was definitely present during those five days, because children that came like hard land were watered with God's Word, and transformation became visible in the end.

I love to worship in the Albanian language and see all groups worshiping God together with hands up, praising Jesus. One night we went to the beach for a barbeque and worship, and God blessed us with His presence. The children took the opportunity in the dark to cry and praise the Lord. Four of them accepted Jesus as Savior and others dedicated their life to God.

Something different that happened this year was the visit of some parents during the activities, a time



courtesy of Norma Teles

Norma Teles (top) led two children's camps in Lezhe, Albania during the summer. Norma invites your prayers for these children who live with non-Christian parents.

for them to see what happened in our meetings. One of the mothers was so impressed that she wrote a letter to the children, counseling them to listen with attention, since what was being shared with them could change their lives and help them to live better.

Others suggested that next year we do the camp with the parents, or something that involved all family members. It is interesting to note that the first to suggest this were two Muslim families that had previously forbidden their children to come to church.

We ended the camp at our Sunday service in the church, where the children did dramas and sketches as we worshiped together. God did wonderful things for us. We were very tired in the end, but felt that God had visited us.

Thank you for your prayers. I know you prayed for these kids and the staff and God answered your prayers. Please continue to put the children before God, that the seeds that were planted might grow and produce fruit. Now that they return to homes that aren't Christian, they need help to continue serving the Lord.

• Norma Teles
Lezhe, Albania

Excerpts from...

An open letter to the churches of 1953



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

In 1953, the most productive year for beginning churches in the history of Virginia Mennonite Conference, five congregations were begun:

Chestnut Ridge, Orrville, Ohio
Mt. Vernon, Grottoes, Va.
Mountain View, Hickory, N.C.
Park View, Harrisonburg, Va.
Word of Life, Norfolk, Va.

Congratulations and best wishes on the 50th anniversary of the official beginning of your congregation.

We rejoice in the faithfulness of God who gives gifts to the church. We commend the pastoral leaders who have served among you. We marvel at the durability of family life. May the joint effort of biological and faith families continue to produce fruit for the Kingdom of God until the coming of Christ!

How have we done in these past 50 years? When looking at photos it is clear that we have experienced cultural change!

After the ferment of World War II we experienced the Cold War; the Korean conflict; rock and roll; a sexual revolution; the Jesus People; the Charismatic movement; the civil rights movement; a drug-abusing subculture; space exploration; computer technology; Vietnam; rising strength of evangelicals; AIDS; rising divorce rates; globalization; discrepancy between rich and poor; Kosovo; 9/11; Afghanistan and Iraq.

The violent deaths of John F. Kennedy; Martin Luther King, Jr.; and Robert Kennedy had a sobering effect on idealistic youth in the 60s. We are now living in the mystery of a post 9/11 world.

In response to these challenges, the Mennonite Church has offered a witness of peace, and alternatives of love. Key thought leaders have included

Harold S. Bender, John Howard Yoder, and Myron S. Augsburger.

Mennonites in the Southern Hemisphere have come to outnumber those in Europe and North America.

As our discretionary wealth has increased, we have built more comfortable church buildings, contributed to mission and service endeavors, bought into the sports and entertainment industries, and extended our education.

In this amazing time we have continued to meet to worship, to teach our young, to re-examine the biblical materials, to baptize believers, to eat meals and wash feet together, to break the bread and drink the cup, to rejoice in newborns and agonize over untimely deaths. We have tried to follow Jesus.

We come now to mark this significant passage of 50 years with gratitude and humility.

May God richly bless your congregation in this time of reflection and looking forward.

Financial Focus

At this Thanksgiving season, God's blessings are evident in many ways: the gift of salvation, the bounty of the earth's provisions, the joy of relationships, and the connection with the worldwide church of brothers and sisters who share faith in Christ.

Please take notice of the envelope enclosed in this issue of *Connections*. Use it to send your Thanksgiving offering for the ongoing work of **Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions**. We give thanks for you always in our prayers!

In December you will have an opportunity to contribute to the ministry of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

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Peace Fellowship Meal unites Harrisonburg District

On September 14, families in the Harrisonburg District extended their tables and their hands in fellowship to other members of the Mennonite Church. Participants in the first annual Peace Fellowship Meal enjoyed getting to know folks from other churches in their district. Guests benefited from a meal provided by their host and gave a donation towards MCC, NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center, and VMBM.

This event invited anyone in a Harrisonburg District church to visit or host a member from another district church. After attending the host's church, guests were then invited to the host's home for a meal.

The motivation behind this event, sponsored by Harrisonburg District Council, was two-fold: to foster a sense of unity within Harrisonburg District churches and to raise money for MCC, VMBM and NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center.

Harrisonburg churches are not the first to hold such an event. Members of the Western District Mennonite Conference in Kansas participate in a conference-wide exchange each year. It is an event looked forward to with much anticipation. The fellowship with other church members helps to strengthen conference ties and raise a significant amount of money for MCC.

This year's participants in Harrisonburg were enthusiastic about the time they spent together.

"We could hardly stop visiting," commented Jan Showalter. "I'm sure as the word is spread, more folks will want to participate."

Besides the fellowship, spending time in another church was also a thought-provoking process. "I found the experience to be educational, refreshing, and meaningful as I reflect on my part in making positive changes in my home congregation," wrote Matthew Morris.

Before you know it next summer will be here and the 2004 Peace Fellowship Meal brochures will arrive in church mailboxes in the Harrisonburg District. Take the time to give and receive an extra blessing by participating in this neighborhood event with worldwide effects.

• Gwen Lantz
Harrisonburg Mennonite Church



Gift & Thrift expanding

The next time you are driving on Mt. Clinton Pike in Harrisonburg, notice what is happening to the former Ray Carr Tire building south of EMHS. The sign now says, "Coming soon—Gift & Thrift." Yes, we will be moving from our space-limited and parking-impossible store on North Main Street by February 1, 2004. The gift, thrift and Booksavers divisions will all be at home in the newly renovated building. With adequate parking, a drive-through drop off for donations, and dedicated volunteers, this will be a customer friendly place.

Our "Gifts of Caring" fundraising campaign emphasizes how we are caring for our world, our community, and our environment. Together we give witness to the Christian faith by supporting MCC in its mission to help suffering people in the name of Christ.

The goal of the Gifts of Caring campaign is to raise \$700,000 so that Gift and Thrift can remain debt free and contribute over \$100,000 annually to MCC. We believe this can be accomplished in the same way our Lord blessed a few fish and loaves and many were fed (with lots left over). With many persons participating with gifts, rather than a few giving the most, the giving of our "village" will make this a thriving resource of support for the whole world. We are convinced that with your help we can do "more with less."

With over 100 volunteers from local churches, nine board members from supporting churches, managers for each of its three divisions, and your generous donations of clothing, housewares, and books, Gift and Thrift has contributed over \$1.5 million to Mennonite Central Committee during the past 20 years.

Thank you for your generous support in the past. Please consider prayerfully what you can share of the "fish and loaves" our Lord has blessed you with. Donations can be sent to: Gifts of Caring, 227 N. Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

• Herb Swartz

Discovering the “joyful agony” of ministry

Raleigh Mennonite Church has always had an interest in leadership development. This past spring, Sheldon Burkhalter from Goshen College asked if we were interested in participating in the Ministry Inquiry Program (MIP), a program that provides Mennonite college students an opportunity to experience pastoral ministry. This meant having a college student intern with us for eleven weeks. We decided to take this as an opportunity to help a young person explore his calling and gifts for ministry. We were not disappointed.



courtesy of Goshen College

Malcolm Sedaca, a Goshen College student, spent the summer with us and immersed his life in our congregation and its ministries. Malcolm preached, counseled some youth, spent time as a volunteer at the Neighborhood Thrift Store,

was part of an inter-church summer outreach neighborhood program, typed the church bulletin, visited the elderly, read 500 pages of books and articles related to ministry, played his guitar during worship, helped serve communion, shared his testimony with the youth, attended Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly, participated in many of our staff and commission meetings, and blessed all of us with his easygoing mode and smile.

While summers typically are slower around here because of people taking vacations (pastors, too), the challenge for our congregation was to find meaningful things for Malcolm to do. However, Malcolm’s willingness to try new things and his eagerness to learn made it easy for us. Our congregation benefited greatly from Malcolm’s enthusiasm for life and willingness to serve in any way possible.

In a time when being a pastor is not always held in high esteem, MIP provides a great opportunity for young men and women to experience pastoral ministry by walking alongside seasoned pastors. He got to experience the ups and downs of congregational life from a leadership perspective and to see on a daily basis the joys and struggles of pastoral ministry. He was able to see in the leader-

ship the “joyful agony” of being God’s instrument. At the end of Malcolm’s time here, it was encouraging for us to hear him say how good it was to know that pastors can lead a “normal life and enjoy meaningful relationships in the congregation.”

Our congregation is grateful for the experience of having an MIP student with us for the summer. It was made possible because funding for MIP comes from congregations, area conferences, the denomination and Mennonite colleges. Each entity, including the student’s home congregation, contributes to the overall expenses. The MIP model might not fit all our expectations or wishes about leadership development in our congregations, but there is no doubt that in the overall picture, MIP is a valuable asset in exploring the call to pastoral ministry. Our congregation would do it again!

• Mauricio Chenlo and John & Marilyn Bender
Raleigh Mennonite Church

Through southern eyes: Harrisonburg pastor sees Africa with Nicaraguan lenses

“Today 60 percent of all Christians live in Africa, Asia and Latin America,” states a July 1, 2003, article in *The Mennonite*. What does that mean for Christians who live in the Northern part of the world? Nancy Heisey, President of Mennonite World Conference, answers in part by saying, “Our Southern sisters and brothers, in a way similar to what is recorded in the New Testament, understand that God is at work everywhere, not only in the small corners of our personal lives. As did the early Christians, today’s growing churches are carrying out Jesus’ healing, liberating ministry in various settings with a warm invitation that is shaped not by wealth or technology, but by vibrant preaching, loving service and peaceable action.”

Clearly, to understand what Christ is doing in today’s world, North American Christians need to communicate and fellowship with the Christians and rapidly expanding churches of the Southern Hemisphere. We need to look at the world and understand God through their eyes. God’s Spirit is moving powerfully in areas of the Church that were once called the “mission field.” In response there is a mounting impulse and need among many North American Christians to be in direct contact and partnership with Christians in the South. But how are we to do that?

To work at this desire, Harrisonburg Mennonite Church (HMC) has partnered in an

Malcolm Sedaca, a Goshen College student from Buenos Aires, Argentina, explored God’s call in his life by participating in the Ministry Inquiry Program during this past summer.

intentional relationship with an Anabaptist congregation in Managua, Nicaragua. The Santa Rosa Brethren in Christ congregation, pastored by Efrain Hernandez Marengo, is located in the capital of Nicaragua. Through several reciprocal visits, HMC has learned that Pastor Efrain is a passionately committed Anabaptist pastor who gently leads a growing, thriving congregation of persons from diverse social, economic and political backgrounds. When HMC decided to send Pastor Beryl Jantzi and his wife Margo to Mennonite World Conference, it seemed a natural step that Pastor Efrain should go with them to Africa. Efrain and Santa Rosa are a part of the HMC congregational identity.

Beryl and Margo not only had the opportunity to experience the worldwide Anabaptist Christian family in worship, study, prayer and discussion, they were privileged to share Pastor Efrain's perspective and responses as well. In an HMC Sunday School class following World Conference, Efrain said that the Zimbabwean church context is much like that of Santa Rosa in Managua. Many of the people are poor and struggling to meet basic human needs. Some church members fail to meet human needs, while a few members of his congregation live in relatively great comfort. Being a church community at Santa Rosa goes beyond prayer, preaching and Bible study. Some members of the congregation require care for the physical aspects of life, too. Santa Rosa is an intentional Christian community with a priority to have others in the city join them.

Pastor Beryl reflected that the experience of World Conference was both inspiring and sobering. Being with Efrain in Africa gave greater depth and enhancement to the meaning of trusting God in spite of difficult circumstances. In private discussions during the conference, Beryl realized that Efrain was identifying with African Christians in a way that Beryl could not. Yet, amazingly, Beryl did not sense a spirit of judgement or envy directed towards him. Beryl had the clear sense that the "Southern Hemisphere Christians" knew that he, a materially rich North American, has needs also.

"I learned that God has ways of meeting needs which transcend the material aspects of life," said Beryl. "I now consider more seriously my choices and the use of time and resources at my disposal."

Christian missiologist Nzasa Lumey, originally from Kinshasa, Congo, and quoted in *The Mennonite* article mentioned earlier, confirms Beryl's observations. Lumey, who now teaches at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif., states, "Christ and his Word have become the ultimate reference to [African] Christians. Worshiping Christ together has consolidated the



Margo Jantzi

unity and bond of Christianity across ethnic, cultural, linguistic and denominational divisions." Attending Mennonite World Conference together has had a similar effect upon the pastors of HMC and Santa Rosa.

Pastor Efrain noted that there are many in his congregation who would not be able to understand the spiritual impact attending World Conference has had upon him. "This was not a foreign vacation. It was an opportunity to become renewed and empowered for the work of God's Kingdom in Nicaragua. I am deeply thankful for this."

Because of the experiences at World Conference, Pastor Beryl says his ministry has been impacted too. "Having met brothers and sisters from around the world in Zimbabwe, I now have a greater sense of responsibility and connection with the global church, of which we are just one small part."

Beryl, Margo, and Efrain experienced Mennonite World Conference together, making the words of missiologist Lumey ring true for the Santa Rosa and Harrisonburg Mennonite Church congregations. "Our sisters and brothers from North America and their siblings in Christ who live around the world stand side-by-side through covenantal love. This tough love to follow Christ goes beyond earthly passport."

• Mark Keller
Harrisonburg Mennonite Church

Efrain Hernandez Marengo of Managua, Nicaragua, and Beryl Jantzi of Harrisonburg, Va., attended Mennonite World Conference together.

Initial damage report from Hurricane Isabel

On September 18, Hurricane Isabel hit portions of Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) very hard, particularly those east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Many suffered extensive tree and structural damage, flooding, and loss of utilities. As of this writing (September 25), we have not received any reports of personal injuries or damage to church structures within VMC, although many church leaders are still without telephones and electricity and therefore may not have been able to tell us of their losses.

At least two congregations, Beldor and Greenmonte Mennonite churches, cancelled their Sunday worship service on September 21 due to lack of electricity. Greenmonte also had water in their basement. Washington Community Fellowship was forced to cancel its annual retreat due to conditions at the recreation center.

Community Mennonite cancelled the first night of its retreat, but found plenty of water in the pond to baptize six teenagers on Sunday.

Pastor Harold Bergey, of Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church in Chesapeake, Va., reports, "Many folks are still reeling from the effects of the storm. One hundred percent of our people lost electricity during the storm, and approximately 25% remained without power six days later. Two church members'

homes were badly damaged, each by a century-old oak dealing a crushing blow as it fell. One of those homes has probably suffered irreparable damage. Worship services were cancelled the following Sunday due to lack of power, water, and a dangerous downed electrical line on the church property. Yet, there is much for which we thank the Lord! Despite several close calls, there were no personal injuries."

Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va., also went through the brunt of Isabel, but they praise God for His faithfulness and protection.

Ed Bontrager, pastor of Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News, Va., writes, "We decided to have services on Sunday, though we had no electricity. We spent the hour mostly sharing with each other some of the happenings during and after the storm. I posed five questions which people responded to: 'Before the storm came, I was con-

cerned about...; During the height of the hurricane, I...; The worst story in my neighborhood was...; It could have been worse if...; and I'm thanking God because...' The congregation appreciated this time to hear each other's stories and do both some commiserating and some thanking.

"One family, who lives near the Warwick River in a very low area, was flooded out with 11 inches of water all through their house. On Sunday afternoon a crew of 10 to 12 men from church moved furniture outside to dry, tore up carpet, and hung tarps to protect the furniture. They continued again on Monday morning. My wife Edie and I spent most of Tuesday visiting a number of families, assessing the damage, sharing our concern, and trying to get help to cut down trees, etc. We plan to hold our regular Wednesday evening service tonight to update each other on what's happening and to have prayer for our community and each other."

Merlin L. Miller, Pastor of Landstown Community Church in Chesapeake, Va., reports, "The congregation came through the storm remarkably well. We had very little damage to homes, but many downed trees, much debris and extensive loss of electric power. However, there were several families that never even lost power.

"At the Wednesday night Bible study the day before Isabel arrived, some prayed that the scripture verse on the church's sign would remain lighted as a testimony and beacon to the community. The church never lost power and the marquee's glow never went out! The scripture was Isaiah 25:4, 'You have been. . . a shelter from the storm.' There was no damage to the church building. We have a row of twelve Bradford pear trees in front, which are highly susceptible to wind damage. Only one tree had one broken limb. We had a wonderful service on Sunday as many gave testimony to God's faithfulness and answers to prayer. One lady summed it up well by saying, 'I just couldn't wait for Sunday to be with my church family.'"

In keeping with our denomination's strong tradition of service and mutual care, church members are helping each other clean up from the storm. Bernard Martin, Chair of Mennonite Disaster Service's (MDS) Shenandoah Valley Chapter, and Ted Houser from the MDS Akron office planned to make an assessment of the eastern shore of Virginia and North Carolina on September 24 to 27. Crews were expected to arrive with chain saws in southeastern Virginia during the first week of October. Please know that those of you who suffered through the effects of Isabel have been in our thoughts and prayers.

• Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator



Jim Bishop

Ray Hurst and Meg Wightman, co-pastors of Community Mennonite Church of Harrisonburg, prepare to baptize David Shenk during the congregation's annual retreat held Sept. 20-21 at Camp Brethren Woods. The after-effects of Hurricane Isabel moved the start of the retreat from Friday evening to Saturday noon.

November 2003 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

30 Many churches celebrated Ministry Sunday last month. Pray that God might use that message to encourage persons who have pastoral ministry gifts, as well as those who minister in their workplace and at home.

2 VMC's Missional Church Team is meeting in Fairfax, Va., this evening and Monday with MMN's Missional Church Development department. Pray that they will sense God's leading as they share ideas and insights.

9 Today is Peace Sunday. Invite God's peace-filled spirit into our world, communities, and churches. Pray that we might be better equipped to speak God's peace and reconciliation into an increasingly violent world.

16 Pray for Willard & Melba Heatwole as they return to the States after six months of service in Lushnje, Albania. They have assisted in community development projects and had a supportive role in the church planting efforts.

23 Philip Rhodes requests prayer for Dameon Hines, one of the pastors at Ridge Mennonite Fellowship, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, as he studies at seminary during the week and ministers in the congregation on Sundays.

Monday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by anonymous donors. We give thanks for the many people who support VMC and VMBM ministries.

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.

3 Pray for MC USA Conference Executives as they meet in Winnipeg, Man., today. Ask for wisdom and discernment as they discuss the business and financial issues facing our denomination.

10 Paul and Esther Kniss traveled from Trinidad to India to assist with ministries there for several months. Ask God to give them a double blessing of his strength and grace for their tasks.

17 Pray for the missionaries that your congregation supports both financially and in other ways. Pray that God would begin to call new missionaries and plant seeds of passion in their hearts to go into the world.

24 Pray for Willard & Eva Eberly as they return to Virginia tomorrow for three months of stateside ministry. Pray for safety in travel and that they will be able to reconnect meaningfully with family, friends, and sending churches.

Tuesday

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matthew 5:13 (NIV)

4 Menn. Economic Development Associates hosted its annual "Business as a Calling" convention in Winnipeg this past weekend. Pray for our business leaders as they consider God's impact on their businesses.

11 Pray for Pastor Jim Delp and the congregation of Staunton Mennonite Church as they explore Natural Church Development with Joe Bontrager, Director of USA Ministries for VMBM.

18 Pray for the many participants who are attending a church planting conference in Rimini, Italy, for Italian church leaders and missionaries. Willard Eberly, Mediterranean Regional Director, helped to plan this conference.

25 Pray that the persons who attended Culture of Call banquets will have opportunities to explore and test their ministry gifts. Pray that new leaders, pastors, and missionaries will be called and respond to God's call.

Wednesday

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matthew 5:13 (NIV)

5 Seven new students are attending the West Indies Theological College in Santa Cruz, Trinidad. Pray for Richard Keeler as he teaches the Survey of the Old Testament this semester.

12 Pray for Joe Bontrager and the pastors of Norfolk and Warwick Districts as the 2020 Vision Focus Group meets tomorrow. Pray that the pastors will be inspired and strengthened for ministry and mission as they meet.

19 Pray for Joe Bontrager as he meets with the reference committee of Restorative Justice Initiatives in Harrisonburg. Pray that the group will have clarity about the challenges of adequate funding and staffing changes.

26 Several groups of youth are gearing up for the first Bible quizzing event. Pray that they will be challenged by what they learn, become familiar with the designated passages, and develop a desire to study God's Word.

Thursday

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matthew 5:13 (NIV)

6 Pray for Scott Garber, Assoc. Minister at Phillips Temple AME church in Dayton, Ohio, as he candidates at Washington (D.C.) Community Fellowship.

13 Pray for Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter as he leads devotions with 337 youth at EMHS tomorrow morning. Pray that they may understand and choose a Christian worldview.

20 Central District pastors are gathering for fellowship this afternoon, and the Council will meet this evening. Pray for Floyd Blosser as he chairs the district, and for Paul Kratz and Richard Bowman as they oversee the churches.

27 Park View Mennonite Church is celebrating their 50th anniversary this weekend with the theme "Through These Doors." Pray that the time of remembering will also bring new vision and energy for ministry.

Friday

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matthew 5:13 (NIV)

7 Pray for Conference Council as they meet this weekend. Their September session was postponed until now due to Hurricane Isabel.

14 Pray for Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter as he takes a guided silent retreat this weekend at Dayspring in Gaithersburg, Md.

21 Omar Beiler is assisted at the Joyland clinic by Miss Hamilton, a Jamaican nurse who recently joined the staff there. Pray that this team will work together well, and that the patients will receive care of the body and spirit.

28 In Jamaica, Dolores Beiler visits with Nicey, a widowed mother of six children, and encourages her in her daily responsibilities. Pray for these women as they nurture Nicey's children in their developing years.

Saturday

1 Pray for the annual conference of the Italian Mennonite Church held in Palermo, Sicily, this weekend. This year's theme is on evangelism and missions. Giovanni Greco will speak on evangelism and Willard Eberly on missions.

8 Thank the Lord for the another successful Bike Shenandoah. Pray for Gloria Lehman, VMBM Director of Public Relations, as she assumes leadership of this fundraiser for next year.

15 Jesse Bergey tills soil, plants seeds, waters plants, and harvests produce, but "God gives the increase" for body and soul! Thank God for Jesse's role as "sower" in rural Jamaica.

22 A Partners in Mission team led by Dennis Rhodes will leave tomorrow to put a roof on the parsonage at Salters Hill, Jamaica. Your prayers are invited for their safety and a good work experience in Jamaica.

29 Pray for Southern and Potomac Districts as they seek overseers to replace persons who are retiring. Pray that God would call out individuals who can walk alongside, counsel, and encourage their congregation's pastors.

Announcements

A **Men's Retreat** will be held March 12-14, 2004, at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center in cooperation with Mennonite Men of Virginia. Myron Augsburg will be the guest speaker. For more information call WCRC toll-free at 866-566-9272 or visit www.wcrc.info.

The **Hmong ministry** in Hickory, N.C., is looking for a used van to transport children to literacy classes and children's church. The children's activities build bridges to the parents, who are often unable to provide transportation because they are working. You may send your contributions of any amount to VMBM, 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22802, designated for "van for Hmong ministry."

Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly will be held July 8-10, 2004, at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg. Mark your calendar and plan to attend!

The **second annual Festival of Praise** will be held on Sunday, November 9, 4:00 p.m. at Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. Participating men's singing groups are: Cantore, EMHS Faculty Men, Eversole Road Quartet, Harrisonburg Mennonite Men's Quartet, Inner Harmony, Singing Men, and Singing Servants. Jay Hartzler will direct the mass choir. The offering will benefit VMBM's pastoral leadership training funds and Norma Teles' children's ministry in Albania.



Radell Schrock, of Harrisonburg, Va., is beginning a one-year MCC assignment as a teacher in Bolivia. He is member of Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.



Jill Wenger, of Mt. Sidney, Va., is beginning a one-year MCC assignment as an English as a Second Language teacher in Indonesia. She is a member of Staunton (Va.) Mennonite Church.

The **Mennonite Congregational Resource Center** is a great place to get ideas for Thanksgiving and Advent services. MCRC, located at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, is open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Visit their website at www.emu.edu/mcrc to browse the catalog, or contact them at 540-432-4219 or wengerkw@emu.edu.

On Saturday, November 8, **Ten Thousand Villages** in the Dayton Farmer's Market will be celebrating its 10th birthday and invites you to celebrate with them. The store will offer 10% off your purchases all day, and there will be special presentations, prizes, and more!

Local comedy team Ted & Lee will mark the sixteenth anniversary of their partnership with a "Comedy Gala" on November 22, 7:30 p.m., at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. The gala will feature both very new material, some old favorites, and "The Name Sketch." For reserve tickets call 540-564-0210. Prices: adults/\$15, students/\$10, family/\$45. Limited preferred seating: adults/\$18, students/\$13, family/\$55. Tickets will be available at the door at 6:30.

Leadership Transitions

Faith Evans was ordained as associate pastor for youth at Washington Community Fellowship, October 5.

Amos Witmer was ordained as deacon at Zion Hill Mennonite Church, Singers Glen, Va., August 31.

Reuben Horst was installed as associate pastor at New Beginnings Church, Bridgewater, Va., July 27.

Willis Hunsberger was installed as pastor of Knoxville (Tenn.) Mennonite Church, September 14.

Wayne North was installed as interim pastor at Ridge-way Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., June 1.

Peter Eberly was appointed as youth pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, October 14.

Steve Swartzendruber was appointed as youth pastor at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Lacey Spring, Va., August 31.

Glendon Blosser retired as overseer in Central District, September 7.

Frank & Evelyn Nice retired as overseers in Potomac District, August 31.

John Kiblinger resigned as overseer in Southern District, September 1.

Dana Blauch resigned as youth pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, August 31.

Truman Brunk resigned as associate pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, August 31.

