

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

November 2004
Vol. 15, No. 1

Hurricane reconstruction and cooperation in Jamaica

"Hurricane Ivan sounded like a freight train thundering past our house all night long," said Dolores Beiler, medical missionary in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, describing the experience of surviving the fury of the storm that affected Jamaica September 10-11.

After the storm, Jamaica Mennonite Church leaders surveyed the damage to the houses and churches. In each of the 13 congregations, members had some loss. The St. Elizabeth churches had extensive roof damage; the Maranatha School for the Deaf sustained severe roof and water destruction. The Joyland clinic was completely destroyed.

As Galen Lehman, VMBM Caribbean Regional Director, and Jim Hershberger, VMBM board member toured through the devastated areas they observed camaraderie of support for others. People helped each other replace the tin on their roofs, and shared fruit from downed trees. In this same spirit of cooperation, the roof of the Abrams Mennonite Church has been rebuilt. The Joyland Clinic is functioning now in temporary quarters in the Joyland Church.

Jamaica Mennonite Church, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Central Committee are collaborating with the hurricane relief efforts. JMC identifies funds as its greatest immediate need. Work teams for rebuilding are also needed as soon as the plans are in place.

At the Virginia Relief Sale on October 2, a comforter was given to the Jamaica Mennonite Church as



a demonstration of care and support for our brothers and sisters there. While it was displayed, many persons in the audience raised their bid numbers to indicate their contribution to the relief fund; \$9,000 was raised. What a gift of solidarity for the body of Christ!

Great thanks to God for His protection is given by individuals and congregations in Jamaica. We join in this offering of praise and thanks. If you want to help in providing funds for hurricane relief, use the envelope inside this issue of *Connections* and return it to VMBM.

• Gloria Lehman
Caribbean Regional Assistant

On Saturday, October 9, about 40 volunteer workers from the Mennonite churches across the island, and helpers from the community around Maranatha gathered for a Hurricane Ivan clean-up day at the deaf school in preparation for the arrival of work teams to assist in the reconstruction.



On the work day at the Maranatha School, Galen Lehman told about the purpose and ministry of stateside Relief Sales, and presented the comforter to Liston Aiken, a member of the JMC Council of Management. At the Virginia Relief Sale on October 2, attendees raised their bid numbers to contribute funds for hurricane relief in the Caribbean region.

Why Become a U.S. Citizen Now?!

On October 1, 2004 I became a citizen of the United States of America. After 32 years of carrying the coveted “green card,” why make the change? That was the question of one of my young nephews who said, “I’d rather be a citizen of Canada!”



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

Why, indeed? Answers would come in the practical, theological, and emotional categories.

First, practical. I weary of having to renew the green card (it’s mostly pink now...) every ten years. It doesn’t change my status in Canada since they will always recognize my Canadian citizenship. Becoming a US citizen may have some beneficial estate tax implications as well.

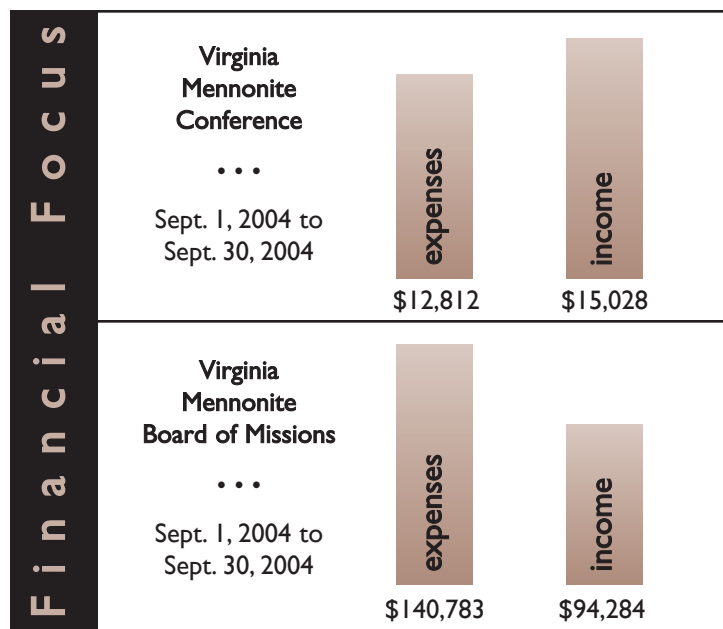
Second, theological. Citizenship in this world doesn’t, ultimately, mean anything. I have been more and more fascinated with the concept, “the reign of God.” Lamb Jesus, whom we praise as “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” is sovereign over all peoples. His kingdom knows no borders. It encompasses all races and peoples. Blessed are those who find their joy in giving first allegiance to Jesus now!

Ascending Jesus commissioned his followers to start with where they were located and eventually make the entire world their sphere of ministry. That remains our challenge. Let the nations rage, we will follow Jesus everywhere he leads. We bring the good news of God’s reconciling love to everyone.

Third, emotional. As I sat and watched the towers of the World Trade Center collapse on September 11, 2001 I felt a bonding to this country, that somehow these were my people who had been brutalized. And I was not alone. For some few weeks the whole world reached toward America in her grief. Soon thereafter I began the citizenship application process (and got caught in the extended delays!).

So, I have joined this nation. I am grateful that in the very immigration process there is provision for declining to bear arms in defense of the country. Was it granted as a result of the faithfulness of our folks during wars in the previous century? In any case, I am grateful.

It is perplexing, since all four of my grandparents were born in the USA, that I wonder if I’ve been in exile in Canada for two generations? Or, have I been in exile in the US for the past 32 years?! Regardless, I have joined my wife and children for whom the USA is temporarily home. We look, “forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Heb 11:10)



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Some of Owen's American paraphernalia he received from friends for becoming a U.S. citizen.

 **Stories of Peace**
 sponsored by the Peace Coordinators
 of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

If you have a peace story to share, please send them to
 Dave and Krista Powell at ecopow@ecolc.net

Words and convictions

My wife Bev and along with our two girls, Renel & Kayley, spent some wonderful years in the former Soviet Union republic of Belarus. We were there from 1994-1999 working as associates of Rosedale Mennonite Missions. We were directly accountable to the Belarusian Baptist Union which is a large group of Protestant churches that was formed when Belarus became an independent country after Communism fell.

There is a large contingency of these believers that are Anabaptist in their theology. In fact many of them were themselves persecuted for refusing to take a weapon and refusing to take the oath when they were drafted into the Soviet army. I met one man who went to prison for three years for refusing to take a weapon and another spent nine years in prison for the same "crime." I was told that during the years under Stalin, some who were nonresistant were shot while others were sent to Siberia to prison camps as enemies of the state.

While we were in Belarus working in villages and small towns, there were other American missionaries working in the capital city some four hours away. When we would go to the capital we would often get together with these other missionaries. We spent time praying together, sharing how ministry was going and we helped each other out as we could.

On one occasion, I was at a meeting that involved many church leaders. I was standing talking to an American missionary when a Belarusian gentleman made his way over to us. We made

continued on page 4



Jerry Kennell, Diana Berkshire, Nancy Hopkins-Garriss and Rosa Bare stand with the sign of the Harrisonburg Day Program building..

A new day dawning at Pleasant View

Pleasant View, Inc. announced plans to build a \$2,300,000 day program facility. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 10, 2004 at 151 Commerce Drive, Harrisonburg, VA. Also announced was a \$2.16 million fundraising campaign to support construction of the day program building and additional administrative space at Pleasant View's headquarters in Broadway.

The new Harrisonburg Day Program, expected to open in fall 2005, will include state-of-the-art space for physical, occupational, music and speech therapies. Gym, exercise, and whirlpool facilities will provide relief for clients whose disabilities cause muscle spasms and discomfort. Modern classrooms and large common spaces will round out client services, along with facilities for job training and placement. Administrative space for staff will be equipped with current office and information technology.

Pleasant View, Inc. was founded in March 1971 and has operated day programs since 1975. It opened the first group home for 6 people at what is now known as the C. C. Turner House outside of Broadway. Pleasant View has grown into an organization which serves over 70 people in residential settings and over 80 people in day support services in 8 locations throughout the city of Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, and beyond.

Pleasant View's mission is to serve people who have disabilities by providing support services necessary for them to live in and enrich the community. To assist each individual in choosing and achieving his or her own vocational, family, emotional, and spiritual goals.

• Dave Gullman
 Pleasant View, Inc.



Congressman Bob Goodlatte (l); Rick Stiffney, MHS Alliance President and CEO, and Larry Rogers, Mayor of Harrisonburg, participate in the Pleasant View groundbreaking.

A teaching adventure

Thanks to an invitation of the School of Discipleship of the Italian Mennonite Church, I had the privilege of returning to my second homeland for much of this past June. The plan was to be in Palermo, Sicily and to teach a course on Anabaptist History and Theology. Classes were held in the mother congregation in Palermo, but persons from the five area congregations participated. Several persons from other Protestant groups attended the course and appreciated learning of the Reformation movement on which all “free churches” in one way or another depend.

Pino Arena, director of the School of Discipleship, had carefully laid the plans for the two-week course and for two preaching opportunities. He and his wife, Rosanna, showed me the wonderful hospitality that only the Italians know how to offer. In keeping with the late night habits of that culture, classes ran from 9:00 to 11:00 in the evening! We were all surprised but pleased at

the number of students, which included congregational leaders but other interested members as well. The maximum attendance was 52 with an average of 40-45. This interest in a course on the origins of the Mennonites reflects the maturity of the Italian Mennonite believers, now anxious to understand exactly who they are within the larger Christian story.

This was an especially poignant experience for me because it was a return to persons, language and culture that my family and I had learned to know and love in six years of ministry in the 1960's. Many persons, including my own wife, Erma, have now passed on, so this visit involved a coming to terms with that new reality. But what fun it was to discover that I could still freely teach and preach in my second language. What a blessing to see the evidence of God's continuing work in the lives of old and new believers alike.

• George R. Brunk III
Eastern Mennonite Seminary

More joy for the journey

...and what a good journey we had! Nearly 200 women attended the annual Mennonite Women of Virginia's retreat at the Holiday Inn Fair Oaks, in Fairfax, Virginia. The guest speaker was Rebecca Sommers from Sarasota, Florida. She was wonderful and witty, with a terrific sense of humor that she shared with us all through the weekend. She reminded us how good it is to laugh with each other, sometimes laugh at ourselves and to enjoy being just a “little bit crazy”. By showing her various quilts, she demonstrated how different we all are, and necessarily so, to make our relationships, and the church, more complete. She encouraged us to celebrate even the little things, to celebrate people in our lives and to bring joy to those around us. She also reminded us to look honestly at our lives and to “clear the clutter”, whether it be schedules and responsibilities or material things, so that we can be more focused on the important things in life. Finally, she spoke to us about the value of “creating sacred space” in our lives, finding sacred time to spend with God -without interruption, and renew our strength in Him.

We were blessed to have a wonderful prayer room designed by Dorothy Shenk, Carmen Shenk Mullet, and Sheryl Shenk. It was a simple, beautiful room that expanded on the themes of the weekend, providing a quiet place to reflect, pray, listen, and meditate in personal and individual ways.

Throughout the retreat we enjoyed seeing the many beautiful quilt squares placed in the center of each table and eating delicious chocolates. The service, food, and hospitality we experienced was wonderful, with a special fruit and chocolate fondue reception on Friday evening. If you missed this energizing weekend, plan to attend in 2005!

• Deb Pardini
President of Mennonite Women

Words and Convictions continued from page 3

small talk for a little while and then he asked a question something like this: If America goes to war with us or would have been at war with us, would you have been shooting at us? My American missionary brother responded nervously that he would do that if called upon. I was joyfully able to tell my Belarusian brother that I wouldn't have taken a weapon and do not ever want to take up a gun and shoot at anybody. I shared with him as much as I could in Russian about what I believe the Bible teaches about nonresistance.

I never thought that I would ever have the privilege to share my convictions, that as an American I did not view this man as my enemy. We were brothers and we were both carrying out our mandate to seek and save...not seek and destroy. I am sure that this Belarusian brother appreciated my words and convictions. I believe it made a difference.

• Tim Kennell
Pastor of Powhatan Mennonite Church

A collage of Albania

Walking through the village today, the first thing that grabs your attention is the fierce, relentless sun. With temperatures at 100° the memories of enduring a cold winter melt real fast and you're not sure if the sun is your friend or enemy. It hasn't rained since June and it's not expected to rain until September. You think about how tragic it was that after the collapse of the nationwide pyramid schemes in '97 that left many people broke and the country in rioting anger, nearly all the forests were cut down and sold or burned for heat. Albania was left deeply wounded during this painful period of transition between 1991 when communism fell and 1997 when any growth that had happened was destroyed. Damage was done not only economically and socially but even in the deeper areas—spiritually and emotionally.

As you walk through the village enjoying the opportunities to stop and greet people, you feel warmly welcomed by the hospitality that is rooted deep in their culture. You may be invited inside for Turkish coffee or you may need to continue on against their wishes. Next you meet and greet a friendly shepherd with his sheep; you try to give him your attention as he tells about his son who had to go to Greece or Italy for work, while you watch his newborn lambs on their first trip with the flock. Next we stop to watch a donkey bray as he walks along pulling his old cart loaded with fresh handcut grass, wondering how a meek, shy animal can put on such a bold noisy, attention-drawing display. Cute grandmas walk by, herding their baby turkeys, ducks, or geese with a stick and making a certain sound that, believe it or not, they recognize.



At a youth meeting we learn that one person couldn't come because the parents were out working and someone had to stay and watch the house. Another couldn't come because their parents feel it is a waste of time to be involved in church activities, especially since it's not an Orthodox church. A very high percentage of the Christians here are youth and first generation believers whose parents don't encourage them to follow the Lord.

Please continue to pray for the people of Albania that the Lord will tear down the walls of fear and distrust in their lives. Pray that the Lord will win hearts and bring them to freedom through Jesus Christ.

• Aaron Clark
YES team to Albania
revised and adapted by Eva Eberly

The YES (Youth Evangelism Service) team stand on a mountaintop overlooking the city. The team was led by Aaron and Joanna Clark and served in villages near Lushnje, Albania.



One hundred and one cyclists rode in the seventh annual Bike Shenandoah charity ride on September 25, beginning and ending at Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Va. Their physical effort raised \$16,000 to meet spiritual, material and social needs through Mennonite Media, Mennonite Central Committee, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Patchwork Pantry.

Building an Italy/Albania connection

SFIDA sends first cross-cultural team to Albania

Through the years since 1991 when communism fell in Albania, the Mennonite churches in Italy have taken an active interest in what God is doing in Albania. In various projects and occasions they have had the opportunity to connect with missionaries and churches there. For example, Francesco Scardina, a Sicilian hairdresser/pastor has made about four trips there to conduct training seminars to teach hairdressing skills, as well as provide products and equipment for Albanian beauticians. One year an Albanian couple was invited by the Italian church to represent the Albanian Mennonite Church at their annual conference.

This summer at the request of Dan and Mary Hess, the missions commission (SFIDA) of the Italian Mennonite Church prepared and sent a missions team to work with them in the agricultural villages near Lushnje, Albania. During their two-week assignment, these four young adults led a youth retreat and helped Sonya Harnish (EMM) conduct two Bible camps for kids in the villages—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. An average of 60 children attended each day. In addition, they were in charge of the village worship service on Sunday morning and the girls on the team spoke at a women's fellowship. Communication went amazingly well, since many Albanians speak some Italian. They needed to speak English with the missionaries.

The response of the missionaries was enthusiastic. "The highlight of August was having the Italian team here. Thank you for sending us a group of servants! They were a great blessing and



The team from Italy that was sent by SFIDA to minister in Albania, (l to r) Massimo Donato, Nadia Hasenfratz, Eva and Willard Eberly, Madiila Arena, (front) Andrea Crocinera, team leader.

well received by the people," one of them said. The team returned to Italy with much joy and appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the life of the Albanian church and to strengthen the Italy-Albania connection.

• Eva Eberly
Mediterranean Regional Assistant

Congregational Resource Center

Stores everywhere remind us that special holidays are fast approaching! Let the Congregational Resource Center help you and your church keep Christ central.

In addition to Thanksgiving and Advent resources mentioned in the October issue of *Connections*, be sure to check out the following:

- The children's books to go with the worship services in *The Leader*. One copy of each is available or check Amazon.com.
- The Worship filing cabinet is chock full of ideas from Advent to Epiphany.

- Look through issues of *Church Worship and Reformed Worship*; periodicals with practical and inspirational worship ideas.

- Take time to visit the CRC and talk with a consultant to find many resources that can enhance your ministry!

The Resource Center is open 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact Jill Landis at 540-432-4219 or crc@emu.edu to make arrangements for evening use.

Visit our website at www.emu.edu/mcrc to browse our catalog.

November 2004 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

7 The congregation of West Liberty (KY) Mennonite Church continues to meet regularly for worship and teaching under capable lay leadership. Join with them in prayer as they seek a bi-vocational pastor.

1 Pray for Seth Hanke, recently hired part time as Greenmonte Mennonite Church's Pastor for Worship and Outreach. Pray that he may be filled with the Holy Spirit and grace as he ministers the gospel.

2 Pray for Richie Tyson, president of the Jamaica Mennonite Church, as he carries heavy responsibilities for the reconstruction of church-owned buildings after Hurricane Ivan.

3 Pray for Dr. P.T. Yoder and Glendon Blosser as they embark on one year interim assignments as Chair of the Health and Mutual Care Commission and VMC's Historical Committee, respectively.

4 The Menno. Economic Development Assoc. is holding their annual meeting in Pittsburgh, PA this weekend. Pray for those who will attend, that they will be inspired as they try to integrate their faith with their businesses.

5 Today Joe Bontrager is meeting at Durham Mennonite Church with the project advisory committee for Eastern Carolina District, to review the past three years and discern priorities for the next period of time. Pray for insight and wisdom.

6 Lawrence Yoder is leading a workshop at Raleigh (NC) Mennonite Church. Pray for Lawrence as he shares with the congregation; pray that the church will be strengthened and be an agent of healing in their context.

Monday

8 Tomorrow night Dr. Paul Lombardo, Director of UVA's Center for Biomedical Ethics, will speak at VMRC's Lyceum Series. Pray for the attendees, that they may find grace in dealing with difficult issues.

15 Richard and Margaret Keeler assisted with the Community Health Day that was held at the Charlottesville Mennonite Church in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on September 25. Praise God for the event's good attendance.

16 Thank God for the outstanding way Dick Good filled in as interim pastor at Riverside (WV) while Robert Wenger was on sabbatical. God enabled him to deliver an excellent message during the community revival effort.

17 Pray for Pastor Boyd Wyatt and Deacon Richard White as they work together to lead the Lambert congregation in its life together and in sharing faith with neighbors in the Bowden, West Virginia community.

18 Pray for the meeting of the "Vision 2020" advisory committee in Hampton, VA at Calvary Community Church to review and coordinate church outreach efforts and church planting in the south-east Virginia region.

19 Monica Unzicker, new VMBM worker at Maranatha School for the Deaf in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, faces challenges each day as she relates to the students and staff. Ask God to give her abundant courage and strength.

20 Crystal and Christopher Lehman participate in the services at Centro Koinonia in Bari, Italy. With their parents, they show care for their neighbors and let their lives reflect Jesus' love.

Tuesday

9 Springdale Mennonite Church is hosting a "Prince of Peace Revival Meeting" tonight with Dr. Myron Augsburger, president emeritus of EMU. Pray that hearts will be touched and souls won to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

22 Thank God for the Harvest Celebration at Zion Hill November 21! The hunters of the congregation provided the speciality of the evening—wild game!

23 Mennonite Church is in transition between pastors. Pray for the Servant Leaders in their leadership role, and for Joe Bontrager as he resources the transition process as interim pastor at Raleigh MC.

24 Ask God to clearly call people to work in the US and the world. May His voice be heard above the noise of daily living and may people say "yes, I will go."

25 Because of God's love and care of us, every day can be Thanksgiving Day! Let's remember to thank Him especially today for the bountiful blessings we have.

26 As the season of holiday shopping begins, remember the option of buying gifts from a fair-trade source. Thank God for the people who organize the artisans, and pray that their benefits will increase.

27 Hebrews 13:16 "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Wednesday

29 A PIM team of eight people from Dayton Mennonite Church is finishing the parsonage at Salter's Hill, Jamaica this week. Pray for the safety of the workers and that the interactions will be blessed.

24 Ask God to clearly call people to work in the US and the world. May His voice be heard above the noise of daily living and may people say "yes, I will go."

30 At Pleasant View, Inc., Harrisburg, residents live in households and build friendships with each other and with the staff that support them. Thank God for this and other agencies who serve this special part of our communities.

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Friday

28 As we enter the season of Advent, let us meditate on the wonder of incarnation. May we experience the truth of Emmanuel.

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"For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had..." Mark 12:44 (GNB)

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by Harold and Ellen Martin in honor of Ellen's sister, Martha Keeler, who died in 1995. Her life of service glorified God and touched others.

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

Announcements

A **Prince of Peace Revival** will be held at Springdale Mennonite Church on November 9, at 7 p.m. Myron Augsburger will be the guest speaker. Using our unique Anabaptist peace stance as a tool for evangelism, this service will attempt to reach both un-churched and churched people who are interested in Christ's teachings of peace. This idea was initiated by the Virginia Conference Peace Committee.

Donate your car to VMC. VMC would like to replace our 1996 Mercury Sable with 120,000 miles with something more reliable. If you have a 1998 or newer car to donate please call Steve Carpenter at (540) 434-9727 or e-mail steve.carpenter@vmconf.org. VMC will also accept donations of older cars for resale to benefit our ministry. We will help you determine the fair market value for income tax purposes. However, the law is changing. Act before December 31, 2004 to maximize your tax deduction.

 The third annual **Festival of Praise** will be held at Park View Mennonite Church,

Harrisonburg, on Sunday, November 7, at 4 p.m. It will feature performances by several men's singing groups, and Jay Hartzler will direct them together as a mass choir to conclude the evening. An offering will be taken that will benefit the ministries of VMBM.

Laura Lehman, of Harrisonburg, Va., began volunteering through Service Adventure August 5 in Albuquerque, N.M. A 2004 graduate of Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Lehman is the daughter of Darlene and Joel Lehman and attends Zion Mennonite Church.

A **Community Shopping Day** at Ten Thousand Villages in the Dayton Farmers Market, Dayton, Va., is scheduled for Saturday, November 20. This is to benefit the Congregational Resource Center, located on the campus of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, providing resources for all ministries. 15% of all sales will benefit CRC.

A **Used Book Sale** will be held at the Congregational Resource Center January 18-19. Tell your friends! This will be held at Eastern Mennonite Seminary during the School for Leadership Training in January. Anyone can donate books beginning now. Books should be in good condition. Take books to EMS to the Congregational Resource Center. Please no journals, periodicals, or novels. Children's books are welcomed.

Pastoral Transitions



Marvin Zuercher was installed as pastor of Chestnut Ridge Mennonite Church in Orrville, Ohio, on September 26. He and his wife Glenda have three children. The Chestnut Ridge congregation is a member of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.



Seth Hankee was licensed towards ordination on October 31. He is the pastor for worship and outreach at Greenmonte Mennonite Church, Stuarts Draft, Va.

Mission Fellowship Tour

to

Italy and Albania (with two nights in Vienna, Austria)

May 6-22, 2005

Visit Italian Mennonite churches and meet with VMBM mission workers and Italian Mennonite Church leaders

Sites include Palermo, Naples, Pompeii, Rome, Bari, Alberobello, Matera, Lushnje, Tirana, Lezhe, Vienna...

Tour Coordinators— Ed and Edie Bontrager
For information email ed.bontrager@vmbm.org or call (540) 434-9727

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