

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

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VMC Churches participate in



At least seven VMC congregations are using Rick Warren's *40 Days of Purpose* (40 DOP) to engage their congregations and communities in a life changing journey. The materials are designed as a tool for congregations to reach out to their communities and help people discover God's purpose for their lives.

Pastor Steve Gibbs said, "We at Warwick River Mennonite Church are very excited about the 40 DOP. It has been an encouraging and growing experience for us. It has potential to bring lasting change. We put 1,500 promotional door hangers out in our community. Two people signed up from that. We began eight new small groups. I would enthusiastically recommend it."

New Beginnings church in Bridgewater, Va., saw several people come to Christ using these tools. "But equally important," says Pastor Ed Heatwole, "were the re-commitments that took place...90% of our people stood to their feet (to rededicate themselves)." Additionally, "Our small groups more than tripled. Most of these are still meeting one year later. We will likely be participating in the next focus, *40 Days of Community*."

Pastor Paul Godshall, at Durham Mennonite Church in N.C. said, "It gave us a common experience and a focus for preaching and small groups...seeds have been sown that will grow and bear fruit." Additionally, three new small groups formed. He pointed out some strengths and pitfalls when he commented, "I was pleasantly surprised by how much emphasis Warren placed on growing in Christ-likeness and on the church as a faith community. But everything ultimately came down to challenging the individual to grow more or less on his or her own. Little is said about the church, as a body, being a witness."

Williamsburg Mennonite Church sent direct mailings to every postal customer in a 2.5 mile radius. Pastor Randy Coblentz says, "By using a bulk mail permit at the Nonprofit Standard rate with a carrier route saturation mailing, postage was 6.3 cents per piece. We also organized a pancake breakfast. Everyone was encouraged to invite friends, family,

and coworkers. An overview of the 40 DOP was presented at the breakfast and each person was invited to join a small group." They purchased enough copies of *The Purpose Driven Life* for every member with extras available to give away.

Interim Associate Pastor, Anna Janzen, at Huntington Mennonite Church, remarked "...many are saying things like, 'My response to this crisis is much healthier since 40 DOP.'"

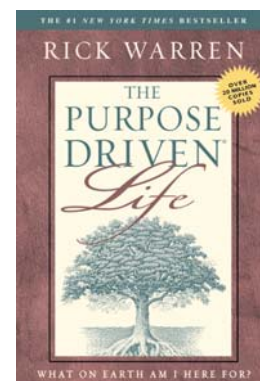
Providence Mennonite Church, under the leadership of their new pastor Ken Peterson, will begin their 40 DOP journey soon.

Harrisonburg Mennonite Church's Associate Pastor Harry Jarrett, Jr, gives the following advice to churches considering using Warren's program.

1. Don't be afraid of it. These are age old Biblical principles.
2. Don't try to second guess what is suggested and come up with something better.
3. Don't minimize the 40 DOP, go all out.
4. At the same time don't try to do everything. Choose what is most needed.
5. Find a mentor church, which has done the 40 DOP before, to help you.
6. Remind your congregation that this is an opportunity for them to invite new people to a service or small group.
7. Gather stories during the forty days then use them during the final Sunday celebration.
8. Ultimately any growth is up to God, so a strong prayer base is essential.

Jarrett can be contacted at: hjarrett7@adelphia.net 540-442-6133. Learn how to order materials, find additional helpful suggestions, and read this article in full on-line at www.vmconf.org.

• Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator



Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* is the basis for *40 Days of Purpose*.

Mr. Ziggle's house

"Mr. Ziggle." That was what he was called. Some of the members of the new Mennonite church in Richmond could not quite get their tongues around "Ziegler," so "Ziggle" it was. But this is not so much about Ralph and Osie Ziegler's name as it is about their house. Specifically, how it came and how it went.



Loren Horst
President of VMBM

That Friday afternoon, Ralph and Osie Ziegler, new church planters to Richmond, were driving down Nine Mile Road. They sensed the Lord's call to Richmond and needed a house. Ralph just happened to see one along the way that he thought might be just right. The only problem? No "For Sale" sign. They stopped in anyway. "Might it be for sale?" The owners were amazed! Just the previous evening they had decided to sell, but had not yet told anyone. Right then and there they agreed upon a price and by Monday the following week the deal was closed. The Zieglers were amazed too!

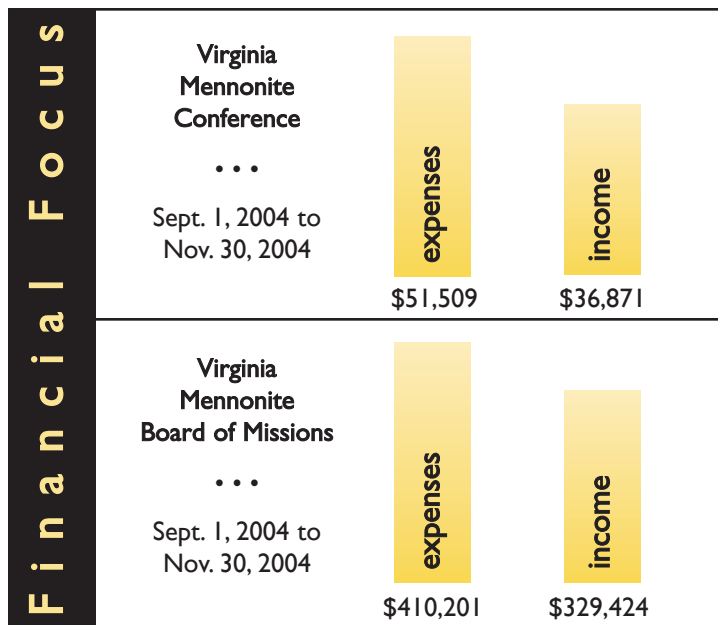
Many years later the Zieglers were retired near Singers Glen, Virginia. The house on Nine Mile Road had fallen into disrepair and was simply closed and boarded up. One afternoon they got a call from their son who had just passed by the old

home place for a look at the property they still owned. "The house is not here," he exclaimed! No plans had been made for its removal yet no one knew where the house had gone. "The lot is here. The trees are here. But the house is gone," they were told!

To this day, the Zieglers do not know what became of the house. Where once stood an old house is now a nicely sodded empty lot. They don't know how the house disappeared but they do know that when God calls you into mission, the supplying or removing of a house is but a small thing to Him! It suggests to them that God can be trusted to provide for the even greater concerns that come our way.

I shared this story one Sunday morning at Lindale Mennonite Church. I ended with, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." Mr. Ziggle called out from the audience, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Loren Horst



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Silo sermonette

When I was farming close to Fort Eustis in the Newport News area, a young enlisted man would come over from the base from time-to-time to work on my farm. He was always sort of a solemn fellow, but it seemed to do him good to be able to get away from the base and just do anything on my farm. One day, I was in the silo putting the silo un-loader together. While he was watching, I accidentally hit my thumb with a big mallet. My thumb was mashed and my nail was dangling in the air. I grabbed and held my hand, and said, "Look, isn't that a doozy". "Is that all you're going to say?" my friend exclaimed with an unbelieving look on his face. That led to a conversation about how I was raised to react to things like that. That led us into talking about religion and God. I explained to him what being a Christian meant to me.

It wasn't long after that day that he left the base and I didn't see him again. I really didn't think much more about it, but one day about two years later I heard a knock on the door. When I opened it, there was this young man. His face was beaming! I could tell right away that he had really changed, so I asked him about what happened. He said, "Do you remember that day in the silo a couple of years ago when you mashed your hand and didn't cuss or get mad? You planted a seed that day. Our conversation really got me to thinking. Later on, I met a young woman who was also a Christian and she made me think even more about my spiritual life. Then, I accepted Christ, married that girl, and now I plan to go to school to be a pastor." He did go onto school and become a pastor. I had no idea that what was a very normal reaction for me that day would plant a seed that would bear such fruit.

- told by Myron Ross
Newport News, Va.



Friendships and blessings in Tanzania

Some members of the Partners in Mission team in Tanzania wait for a chapel service to begin.

In September, John and Susan Stahl, Elmer and Martha Ann Miller and Marvin Slabaugh formed a Partners in Mission team and served in Musoma, Tanzania. Connections with Nelson and Jessica Okanya and Joe and Edith Shenk, former Harrisonburg, Va., residents, enabled them to learn and serve in this exotic location.

Their work of painting the women's dormitory and repair work was helpful to the Mennonite Bible College of East Africa. But perhaps this was not the most important aspect of their interaction there. Visiting with the students and worshiping with the congregation of Shirati Mennonite Church were times of blessing, especially listening to the choirs and joining in with the spirit of praising Jesus.

John Stahl reflects on his experience in this way: "There were real spiritual and personal benefits to our visit. We trust that we were an encouragement to others. They certainly encouraged us by their faith and work in what might look like hopeless situations. We enjoyed making new friendships with students and staff. We also renewed old friendships. Our hearts are better prepared to pray for missionaries and the church in the African setting. We have seen God at work in ways that enlarge our understanding and faith."



The new First Mennonite Church building at 601 E. Parham Road in Richmond.

First Mennonite: church on the move

“We see a church on the move” reported our elder team in the minutes of their October meeting. That move was completed, at least in physical sense, when we celebrated the first service of worship in our new facility on Nov. 7. (Located at 601 East Parham Road)

This event had been greatly anticipated by the entire congregation since the ground-breaking ceremony in February. After a slow start, the construction picked up the pace and, blessed with generally good weather, the building was completed in nine months, to the almost disbelief of some and the “we can do anything with God’s help” attitude of others.

A concluding farewell service was held in our former church on Oct. 31. Canceling the Sunday School hour, we spent the morning singing, sharing, and hearing of God’s love and grace in our congregation the twenty-four years we “lived” at the Staples Mill Road location.

Those who shared of their experiences with us included former overseers Lloyd Weaver and Paul Swarr, former pastors Bruce Yoder and Wayne Speigle (via letter), former member Ida Mae Leatherman who shared a story with the children, and a number of current members.

Following that service, approximately 40 persons ages 8-80 walked the six miles to the new site. With the leaders of the group carrying a cross and the Bible, the walk symbolized both our daily walk with God and our desire to be “a church on the move” for God.

In another symbolic yet highly meaningful project at the behest of our pastor, Barry Loop, we cooperated in reading through the entire Bible the week before

our move. Beginning at midnight on Oct. 31, we read aloud in one-hour shifts around the clock in the new church. With only a few breaks in the schedule, the reading was completed on Thursday, Nov. 4. Approximately forty different people participated in the reading.

We gathered the morning of Nov. 7 with much anticipation, meeting first in our Sunday School hour as usual. The worship service at 11:00 would provide the climax to the morning. Pastor Barry began the hour and a half celebration quoting from the Psalms - “This is the day that the Lord has made. We will be rejoice and be glad in it.” Expressing the joy and happiness he felt on this occasion, he shared in the emotions we were all feeling.

The service continued with a children’s story by Sue Loop of how God led the Wise Men on their journey by a star and that God had led us on our journey in the building of a new church house. A special group than sang “Star of the East” as the children carried stars on wands through the sanctuary. This song was also sung at the last service in our former church house a week before. Responses followed by two persons who had participated in the Bible reading about their ideas and feelings at their time of reading. Barry’s message then challenged us to live worthy of the calling we have received and to accept the grace which we have been given, so that the body of Christ may be built up, based on Ephesians 4. The closing prayer thanked God for his faithfulness in the building and moving process, and we renewed our commitment to trust him for the future of our congregation.

At the conclusion of the service, all in attendance - which included a number of visitors - were invited to a reception in the Fellowship Hall. The opportunity to refresh our bodies with food was a fitting end to a satisfying and memorable morning which filled and invigorated our spirits as we worshiped in our new Lord’s house.

• Jim Good
First Mennonite Church, Richmond



(right) A view of the new sanctuary at First Mennonite Church.

Renewal and excitement for 17th annual Italian Mennonite Church conference

Missionaries Marcia and Phil Lehman worship with Italian believers at the annual Conference, attended by 250 people.

There was a sense of anticipation and expectation in the air as people gathered for the 17th annual conference of the Italian Mennonite Church (Oct. 31-Nov. 1). Renewal through the Holy Spirit was the theme the pastors had chosen in response to a felt need not only in their churches, but also in their own hearts. The enthusiastic, exuberant worship that opened the three sessions warmed and prepared hearts for what God was going to say and do. Many experienced God's presence in a new, fresh way as Willard Eberly, VMBM missionary, presented the Word with unusual passion, believers shared personal testimonies of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and the summer teams 2004 excitedly reported how God had worked in and through them. Encouraged by these reports, more than 15 persons responded to a call for commitment to serve on future teams.

Since the hotel that usually hosts this assembly was not available at the last minute, the conference had to be held at Centro Agape. Although the largest among the Mennonite church facilities, it was small for the 250 who participated. Interestingly, many expressed appreciation for the feeling of intimate fellowship and closeness in a familiar place. What initially seemed negative actually proved to bring blessing.

So great was the desire for spiritual refreshment that an extra session was proposed, to which more than 50 people came from 6 congregations. Should it be surprising to see how the Holy Spirit faithfully responded to prayer on behalf of this conference? The faith of God's people was not disappointed for He was in their midst and fulfilled the desires of many hearts!

• Eva Eberly
VMBM missionary in Bari, Italy



A work-team experience in Jamaica

My husband Benjamin and I had the privilege to travel to Jamaica with three young men from Zion Hill Mennonite Church to help in the reconstruction efforts at Maranatha School for the Deaf (MSD).

When we started working Monday morning, only half of the dormitory was under roof. By Friday afternoon, both the school building, including the cafeteria and kitchen, and the second half of the dormitory had roofs restored. As rewarding and encouraging as it was to watch the zinc sheets cover the rafters piece by piece, I carried additional treasures home with me in the memories of my interactions with the staff and students at MSD.

As a result of the damage from Hurricane Ivan, a staff apartment under the dorm had become the center for preparing and eating food. Lovette, Verica, Precious, and the students cheerfully braved the heat and small working space to prepare the food and clean up from the meals while looking forward to the day when the electricity will be restored to the main kitchen so they can use it again.

Another treasure is the memories of the conversations with the dorm students in the evenings. As the only member of the team that could communicate with sign language, I became the interpreter and learned yet more signs from patient teachers such as Kevon, Terrence, Andrine, and the two Tonyas. When more people joined the conversations and interpreting became difficult, the students suggested pencil and paper, and the conversations started to fly.

I also treasure the ways that I have grown spiritually through learning to know my Jamaican brothers and sisters, through our interactions as a team and through seeing God's protection, provision, and love both in my own life and over the school.

As Kevon said "goodbye" to the team, he signed, "God bless you!" That moment has become the benediction of the experience for me. We were truly blessed by the people we met and with the joy of watching God provide in many ways for his flock in Jamaica.

• Lavonne Heatwole
Zion Hill Mennonite Church



Madila and Massimo are two young adults who were on the summer team to Albania. They shared their testimonies at the conference.

Swartzentruber and Unzicker begin Maranatha service in Jamaica



Krista Swartzentruber

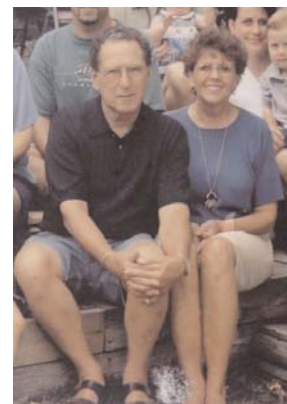
Krista Swartzentruber, from Greenwood Mennonite Church, Greenwood, Delaware, and Monica Unzicker, from East Union Mennonite Church, Dalton, Ohio, are serving as teaching assistants at the Maranatha School for the Deaf. Both of them are interacting with the students and staff, living in the community and relating to the Ridge Mennonite Fellowship that meets in the chapel on the school campus. They will serve through July 2005. Pray for them as they demonstrate Christ's love to all they meet.



Monica Unzicker

Schrocks serve as coordinators in Jamaica

Ed and Irene Schrock, from Beth-El Mennonite Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, are serving in Jamaica as coordinators of work teams coming to Maranatha School for the Deaf to rebuild damage done by Hurricane Ivan. They will also relate to the school teachers and students, providing enriching activities for them. Ed and Irene bring with them a variety of international experience, most recently serving at a school in India. The Schrocks will serve through the end of February 2005.



Congregational Resource Center

Vacation Bible School is six months away and if you haven't started planning for your summer event, now is the time! CRC has over a dozen VBS programs available for you to peruse and borrow. Available are VBS kits from Mennonite Publishing Network (1999-2003), Group, VeggieTales and more. Most kits come with program director and teacher guides, and worship, arts/crafts and activities booklets.

Several video series by Beth Moore, a popular women's Bible study leader and teacher, have been co-purchased with VMC congregations. Two series should be available for use by January, 2005.

Don't forget that the CRC has plenty of materials for worship leaders and Sunday school teachers. If you are at a loss of what to do next, or if you are looking for new ideas, stop in at the Resource Center!

The Resource Center is open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 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.

January 2005 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

30 Christopher and Crystal do home schooling in Bari, Italy. Remember them in prayer as they study and grow up in the Italian culture.

2 A Partners in Mission team leaves tomorrow from West Liberty, KY to repair hurricane damage at Maranatha School for the Deaf. Pray for their safety and the establishment of great contacts with the local people.

9 Some Mennonite believers in Northern Italy are persistently asking that a Mennonite church be established in their area. Put this request before the Lord today.

16 Pray for Eastern Mennonite Seminary's (EMS) annual School for Leadership Training this week. Pray for Seminary Dean Ervin Stutzman as he directs the theological education of future pastors.

23 Sara and Emily Martin make many friends attending the Italian public schools in Bari. Let us pray for them as they relate to their teachers and peers each day.

Monday

31 NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center ministers to many immigrants that come to Harrisonburg for employment. May they find the resources needed for physical and spiritual well being.

3 Thank God for the life and witness of Brother Behavis, member of Good Tidings Mennonite Church, Kingston, Jamaica for many years. He died in November, and his legacy of Christian witness, prayer, and encouragement lives on.

10 At the Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica, Monica Unzicker is assisting with classes at the beginning of the new term following the holidays. May God grant her good insight for each task, and a deep love for each person.

17 Pray for the missionaries in Albania who need extra stamina and strength to face the cold, dark, rainy months of winter when the electricity is frequently off. Pray that the joy of the Lord would be their strength to sustain them.

24 Pray for discernment and compassion for the church planting team in Bari, Italy as they nurture friendship among those who have not yet met God in a personal way. Love cultivates the soil of people's hearts.

Tuesday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by Bettie Wilson in loving memory of her husband, Hal, whose birthday was January 17.

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, please contact Gloria Lehman at gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or (540) 434-9727

4 The Urban Ministry Advisory Committee for Eastern Carolina District meets tonight at Durham Mennonite Church. Pray for the meetings, and for the continued witness of Mennonite churches in Eastern Carolina District.

11 Pray for the leadership team of Raleigh Mennonite Church meeting tonight. RMC is in transition between pastors and the pastoral search committee is beginning its work. Also remember Joe Bontrager, who is the interim pastor.

18 Jill Landis, Director of the Congregational Resource Center, will host a booksale at EMS today and tomorrow to raise funds to support their ministry. Please pray for Jill as she helps support congregations and seminary students.

25 The money management and stewardship seminars that are being taught by Orval and Dorothy Shank in Trinidad provide sound Biblical teaching on these topics. Pray for the Shanks as they minister in this way.

Wednesday

"...He got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop, and there was a great calm. Everyone was amazed. 'What kind of man is this?' they said. 'Even the winds and the waves obey him!'" Matthew 8: 26-27

5 The pastors and officers of Southern District will meet tomorrow night at Springdale Mennonite Church. Pray for them during this transition as Springdale co-pastors Mark and Kathy Wenger prepare to move to PA this year.

12 VMC's Nurture Commission will meet in the home of Louise Alderfer tomorrow night in Waynesboro, VA. Pray for Chair Sandy Snider and the commission as they "consider how to spur one another on to love and good works."

19 Pray for Morris and Elaine Baker who lead the Alpine Mennonite Church in Kingston, Jamaica. This "light on the hill" above the city shines brightly in the community. Ask for God's strength and grace to enhance their ministry.

26 Please pray for high school seniors who are making important plans regarding their futures as they determine final college selection, job plans, service opportunities, and much more. Pray for them as they seek to hear God's will.

Thursday

6 VMC's Finance Committee meets tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. Pray for Treasurer Ron Piper and the others gathered as they consider how to meet the fiscal challenges and fund many ministry opportunities of VMC.

13 Margaret Keeler counsels women in many places, sometimes by personal visits, sometimes by phone. Ask God to give her the words to speak so that hearts and lives may be touched by Christ in a deep and meaningful way.

20 In the second semester at West Indies Theological College, Richard Keeler teaches a New Testament course. His students come from a variety of islands in the Caribbean; this provides a good setting for teaching and learning.

27 Pray for Ed & Irene Schrock who are living on the Maranatha School campus in Jamaica. May they have God's insight for their tasks.

Friday

7 VMC's Conference Council meets today and tomorrow at Eastern Mennonite University. Pray for Moderator Beryl Jantzi and the others gathered that their work might be worshipful and productive.

14 TCK District is meeting Friday night and Saturday in Asheville, NC. The VMC Missional Church Team is presenting resources for strengthening congregational life and witness. Pray for the TCK leaders as they gather together.

21 Eastern Carolina Urban Ministries decided in early November to commit its funds from the City on a Hill 2003 to church planting in Graham, NC, over the next three years. Pray for God's direction and care.

28 Please pray for those working on plans and implementation for Charlotte 2005. Pray that they will be able to hear God's urgings in the midst of the details to create a space for worship.

Saturday

1 Isaiah 61.1: The Sovereign Lord has filled me with his spirit. He has chosen me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to announce the release of captives, and freedom to those in prison.

8 Pray for Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter as he brings the message at Stephen's City Mennonite Church tomorrow. Pray too for Pastor James Musser, that he might shepherd the flock with wisdom and grace.

15 Omar Beiler continues to serve patients from the mountain communities in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica in temporary facilities set up in a wing of the Joyland Mennonite Church. May Christ's love flow through him to each person.

22 Norma Teles, Brazilian missionary in Albania, leads a ministry to gypsy children in a small kindergarten-type setting and a large Saturday Bible Club (about 90 kids!). She needs your prayers for wisdom and strength.

29 The Eastern Carolina District Council meets today in Durham, NC. Pray for the ECD leaders as they gather and share about the most effective ways to work together to strengthen their presence in the rapidly growing areas.

Announcements

World Day of Prayer is March 4. The material this year is prepared by the women of Poland, and distributed by Church Women United. The theme is "Let Our Light Shine." To order the leader's guide, contact CWU at (800) 298-5551 or cwu@churchwomen.org. The item is #1501, and the cost is \$3.30 (includes S&H). You can order via credit card or mailed check. Please order by January 19 with mail orders.

If you enjoy singing a cappella with other men, you are invited to join in the **Shenandoah Valley Men's Chorus** for the second annual concert on Friday, March 25 at 7 p.m. in the new EMHS auditorium. There will be rehearsal times each Sunday from 3-4:30 p.m. at EMHS, January 30-March 20, 2005. They hope to have around 150 men, and Jay Hartzler will direct the chorus. Please contact Jacob Heatwole as soon as possible if you plan to join, at (h) 879-2027 or (w) 433-7068, or Gloria Lehman at VMBM at 434-9727.



Hunt Family Fiddlers, Chesapeake, Va., will perform on Sunday, March 20 at 4 p.m. in the EMHS auditorium. An offering will be received to benefit Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions ministries.

Brian McLaren on: The Church and Mission in a Changing World will be the theme of a combined **Ministry and Youthworkers Retreat**, February 11-13, at the Williamsburg Holiday Inn, Williamsburg, Va. The registration deadline is **January 12**. Brochures and registration forms can be found at www.vmconf.org/youth/events/youthworkers or email info@vmconf.org.

The Virginia Mennonite Conference Youth Office will host a **30 Hour Famine** at Eastern Mennonite High School, March 4-5. The 30 Hour Famine is a program of World Vision, and the proceeds will help supply food to children in some of the world's poorest countries.

HMC Men's Quartet will give a concert on Friday, January 28, at 7 p.m. at Lindale Mennonite Church, 6 miles north of Harrisonburg on Rt. 42. The offering proceeds will benefit VMBM ministries. Come and enjoy a wonderful evening of music!

A **winter delegate session** will be held February 5 at Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va. If you are a VMC delegate, please plan to attend. There

will be coffee and donuts at 9:30 a.m., session from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. with lunch at the church for a modest charge.

The position of **Facility Manager** is open at Highland Retreat starting February 1. A person filling this position must support the mission of the camp and have skills in all or most of the following areas: janitorial, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, landscaping. Must be a team player with management abilities. Contact Paul Beiler at 14783 Upper Highland Dr, Bergton, VA, 22811, 540-852-3226 or paulbeiler@highlandretreat.org.

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