

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

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Christmas at Maranatha School in Jamaica shows love, joy

On December 15, there was more excitement than usual at the Maranatha School for the Deaf, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. The day of the Christmas program had arrived, and the teachers, staff and students were preparing for the big event. Robert and Lois Wenger, VMBM workers guided the teachers in making 150 doughnuts to sell after the program. When the teachers heard that the Wengers organized the making and sale of 16,000 doughnuts at the Virginia Relief Sale in previous years, they were amazed!

Students arrived in their "Sunday best" clothes and got ready for their roles in the program. In the chapel, the set for the play created a rustic backdrop; this was prepared by the students with Robert's guidance. Soon family members made their way up the hill to the school, and the program began.

The youngest students performed short poems and songs--some of these have been learning sign language for only a few months, and it was a challenge for them, but they did well. The teachers signed "Mary, Did You Know?" and added a touch of drama. Then the main feature, the classic Christmas story, "Amahl and the Night Visitors" was performed by the older students, directed by Monica Unzicker, VMBM worker.

The student players signed their parts, while staff members said the words. The story unfolded as J. B. as Amahl, a crippled boy, sees the unusual star and tells his mother, Andrine Raynor. The mother is skeptical until three kings (Andre Hillary, Wade Bromfield, and Paul Williams) and a page (Demeisha Heath) come to the door of her humble house. Because they are without any supplies, the shepherds come with gifts and perform a dance to entertain them. At Maranatha, the deaf students did a choreographed presentation of three Christmas carols, showing their sense of rhythm and joy of movement.

Amahl's mother attempts to steal the kings' gold, is caught by the page, and fended off by Amahl. When Amahl's mother and Amahl understand that the Child the kings are seeking will redeem the world, Amahl decides to give his crutch to the Child. As he hands it to the kings, he is healed of his limp. Amahl goes with the kings to give the crutch to the Child himself, because as he says, "who knows, he may need it, and I have made this myself."



It was especially poignant to see the deaf students perform this play about a young boy who was also disabled, and to see them enter into the miraculous healing when giving what little they have to the Christ Child.

The students received their gifts from their sponsors, and their happiness is clear as they look through the gift bags! Sponsors in Virginia and Pennsylvania send gifts with Galen and Gloria Lehman for this occasion.

Each student currently has one or two sponsors, but needs five sponsors to cover the expenses that are incurred for a year of school at Maranatha. If you would like to sponsor a student, to help them receive the education for body, soul and spirit, contact Gloria Lehman at gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or (800) 707-5535.

(above) Students at Maranatha School for the Deaf perform a Christmas story drama, "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

(below) Students opening presents sent from sponsors.



• Gloria Lehman
VMBM Caribbean Regional Assistant

One day at a time...

“What have we done?!” My wife, Ruth Ann, was in the hospital having given birth to our first daughter. I was in our mobile home preparing the baby bed to receive our precious bundle the next day. “We have begun something that will never end,” was the very sober thought that followed the question. I found comfort in the reassurance that came from somewhere that said, “one day at a time.” That was Easter, 1973.



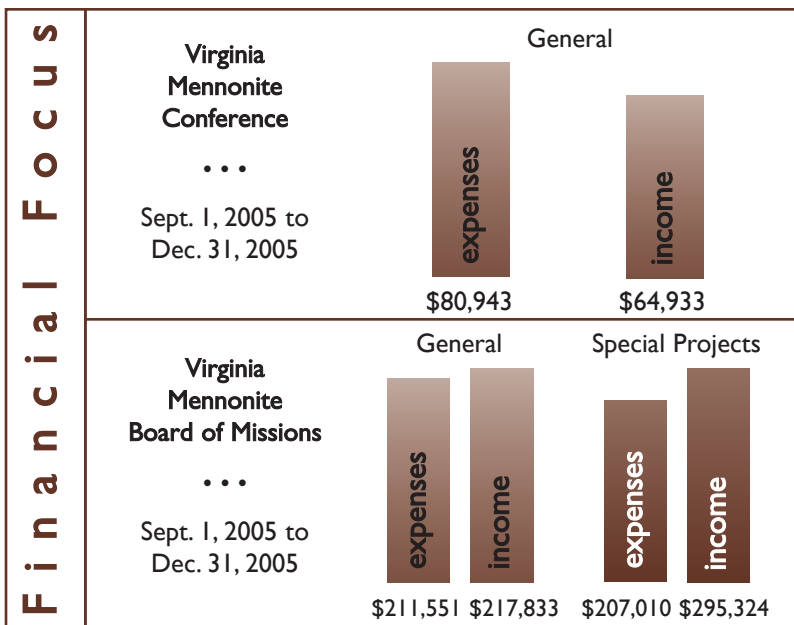
Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

Some thirty-two years later I am humbled to be a friend to the bishops/overseers of Virginia Mennonite Conference. That means being available for consultation on some of the most interesting and challenging situations that arise for leaders of our congregations. I literally do not know what may come my way each day as I head to the office. Starting the day with worship that includes Bible-reading, prayer, and quiet reflection, is a life-giving (life-saving?!) exercise for me.

Some months ago the US Senate took an action apologizing for not addressing the phenomenon of lynching that lingered as a mob-driven way to maintain fear in the African-American community well into the civil rights era. That very same week was the publication of a book by a US Senator that tried to explain his early involvement in the Ku Klux Klan. As a church leader I recognized the leadership implications of those earlier inactions and actions. How then, does a leader function to avoid those things that will look strange in history’s eyes?

I find myself going back to the “one day at a time” principle. At some early point in a leader’s life the intentional direction is set—what light will life be guided by? Given our current discussions, let’s say that might be the “missional” impulse—what is God doing in our world and how can we align ourselves with that intention? From that point on, one seeks to inform oneself on the basics of that challenge and then seeks to implement it on a daily basis.

Will I make mistakes that will look strange some years down the road? Have done! Am I paralyzed by indecision because of fear of judgment by the future? Not usually—I have come to trust that we have been given the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide in the missional and discernment tasks. It is our business to invite that presence into the stuff of every day.



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Stories of Peace

sponsored by the Peace Coordinators
of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

Our “Elisha House”

In the spring of 1989, we took a woman from a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center into our home. Janet lived in our small upstairs apartment that we call our “Elisha House.” She helped with the outdoor farm chores, milking, and in our retail farm supply store. For six weeks things went exceptionally well. She seemed to blossom in the spring sunshine, took pride in her work and wormed her way into our hearts. She even went to church with us once! Her past was mostly a closed door. It had been years since she had contact with her family.

Then one Sunday while we were at church, she stole our truck and fled. We were stunned. That afternoon she was stopped in Charlotte, N.C., for drunk driving. She was arrested for driving without a license and possession of a stolen vehicle. The next morning she posted bond with the money she had stolen from us and became a “wanted” missing person. My husband Gene and one of the men from church, Bill Schaefer, drove to North Carolina and picked up the truck. I was able to find a telephone number for her parents, and called them. We had a sad but wonderful talk. They were so relieved to know where their daughter was and that she was alive.

Two days later the phone rang and it was Janet. She didn't know why she was calling but... Gene got on the phone and talked to her and she agreed to not run and to let us come get her. The next day, with the sheriff's permission, Gene and Tom, her counselor, drove back to North Carolina to pick her up. The sheriff allowed her to stay with us that night before turning herself in the next morning. It was a night of much talking, tears and laughter. I shared with Janet how I had called her parents and their deep concern and love for her. For the first time in years, Janet picked up the phone and tearfully called her mom and dad. It was a night of reconciliation I will never forget. Janet ended up spending three months in jail and then because of our desire to forgive her and to give her another chance, the judge allowed her to come back to us on probation.

Janet continued to be lured by her addiction to alcohol. After some months, we awoke early again one morning to the sound of our pickup speeding out the driveway. We began to pray that Janet would stop and call home. After three days, she contacted her counselor, who told her to give up

the truck immediately. She stopped at an AA Group in Amarillo, Texas, who turned the truck into authorities while she disappeared into the west. This time Gene flew to Texas and drove the truck home.

Numerous times through the years Janet has called or emailed, but she is always very careful to not reveal where she is. She is living the life of a fugitive, hiding from the law, scared she will get caught, and ensnared to the evil taskmaster she has chosen to serve. Once she had a powerful short-lived conversion at a street church and she called and asked for our forgiveness.

Janet caused us to experience our faith. We know about God's protection, His faithfulness and divine intervention. We learned about forgiveness— not once but many times over. God has wrapped his arms of peace around us and given us the opportunity and the grace to open our Elisha house throughout the years to numerous persons. Gene always states he has just one request, “Just don't take my truck!”

• Pat Hertzler
Powhatan Mennonite Church

called and sent!

Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

Will you serve in one of these places?

Teach in an English School in Lezhe, Albania, and relate to the growing congregation in that town as part of the outreach team. Serve for 2 years, and begin as soon as possible.

Contact Ken Horst, Mediterranean Regional Associate, at (800) 707-5535 or email: ken.horst@vmbm.org

There is a renewed call from the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago for **individuals to serve as mentors to pastors in Trinidad.**

Serve beginning in Fall 2006. Contact Galen Lehman, Caribbean Regional Director, at (800) 707-5535 or email: grlehman@aol.com

Celebrating Christmas with Good Tidings church



Sis. Sydna Senior enjoys the candlelight celebration with two young friends.

The sounds of a bustling city swirled around the oasis of the Good Tidings Mennonite Church in Kingston on Saturday night, December 17. The Women's Fellowship Christmas Treat brought together women in a wide range of ages, many bringing platters of food and a gift for their "secret sister." The sanctuary itself was interesting, because the renovations are nearing completion and the large building is spacious and inviting. It was even more so with the Christmas lights and tree at the front.

Various women shared a cappella solos, letting their resonant voices flow through the open windows and doors of the church. A witty monologue turned into a dialogue when a member in the audience responded and everyone enjoyed the banter! Later, the women gave their secret sister their Christmas gift, revealing the secret. Then the delicious food was enjoyed--traditional favorites like curried goat and rice and peas and others like lasagna.

On Sunday morning, about 120 worshippers gathered. Members of the Junior Praise Team led the congregation in singing the opening songs. A local well-known and revered Christian DJ spoke briefly and sang a song that blessed everyone because, as he said, he slowed down the words so that even the visitors could understand! Sister Pauline Millwood brought the sermon titled "All or Nothing" and made a clear plea for persons of all ages to consider the serious business of committing all to Christ. Warm fel-

lowship followed as many persons greeted each other at the close of the service.

Sunday evening, once again the congregation gathered for the annual candlelight service. The St. Catherine's Brass Band came with their wind instruments, drums, keyboard and cymbals for this special service. The Brass Band accompanied the congregational singing and performed alone. The upbeat music had everyone clapping and toe-tapping. Congregation participation included special songs and a worship dance performance by four young women. Then the congregation lit their candles, and as the band played, everyone processed out of the church to the parking lot. There under a mango tree, the people sang carols, holding candles high overhead, moving about, wishing everyone a "Merry Christmas" especially when the band played "Feliz Navidad." The joy that radiated from the happy swaying participants was tangible! Dark, moist Christmas cake and Christmas drink, sorrel, was served and the celebration continued.

A week earlier, Good Tidings hosted the annual Children's Christmas Treat, an event that brings together many children and their families. Every child receives a wrapped gift, hears the Christmas story, and enjoys chicken and rice and peas. According to Sister Valda Salmon, organizer, this year around 400 children participated in this outreach event.

Returning to Virginia wasn't quite as numbing as it could have been with the drastic change in temperatures, because the warmth of celebrating Christmas in Jamaica was still inside us!

• Gloria Lehman
VMBM Caribbean Regional Assistant

About 400 children and youth took part in the annual Christmas Children's Treat at Good Tidings Mennonite Church in Kingston.



UNVEILIN **GLORY**

IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE • TO ALL PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

A seminar to help the body of Christ discover the glory of the Lord in new ways and to see His glory go to all the nations of the earth.

Speaker: **Gerald Robison**, from Newport News, Va., is vice-president of UnveilinGlory, co-author of *Cat and Dog Theology* and trainer for *Walk Thru the Bible Ministries*. His passion is to see God's people become excited and committed to glorifying God and to taking the Gospel to all peoples.

Saturday, February 11, 2006
9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
EMU Suter Science Center Room S 106

Lunch will be provided.

Register by contacting Laura Moyers at (540) 434-9727, (800) 707-5535 or email laura.moyers@vmbm.org
Registration fee of \$10 will be received at the door.

SESSION 1: Introducing "Cat and Dog Theology"

The first session asks a simple question: Who is the main character of the Bible? Christians come to realize that although they say God is the main character of the Bible, they live and act as if people are the main character... and without realizing it, they are living out a very people-centered theology...

SESSION 2: Eight Dangers of "Cat Theology"

This session reveals eight dangers that result from a people-centered theology. We begin by examining Christian humanism and find that most Christians are more concerned about God building their kingdom than about them building God's kingdom!

SESSION 3: The Story of the Bible

Our third session asks the question, "Since life is to revolve around the glory of God, how can we bring our Father the greatest glory?" The answer is found in rediscovering World Evangelization by focusing on what God gets out of it, rather than simply what people get out of it!

SESSION 4: The Missing Half of the Bible

In this session, we show how many Christians are only reading half of their Bible, focusing on God's desire to bless them and overlooking their responsibility to be a blessing.

SESSION 5: Pursuing God's Greatest Glory

Our final session asks, "Since we've had the Great Commission for 2,000 years and we've known of God's desire to reach all nations...how are we accomplishing the goal?" Here we look at current world statistics on world evangelization, showing how the gospel is exploding around the world. Your congregation will be in awe when they see what God has been up to. During this time we also eliminate many of the obstacles that prevent Christians from being involved! We give practical suggestions and mention current opportunities to be involved in establishing God's kingdom.

Family Life Resource Center offers seniors PGCMs

The Family Life Resource Center is located at 273 Newman Avenue, Harrisonburg.



Melvin, age 82, is devastated by the death of his wife on whom he had depended. He wants to live in his own home but needs help to do so. His only daughter lives 800 miles away.

Rose, age 88, lives in an assisted living facility and a move to nursing care is anticipated. She has no close relatives to assist, support, or advocate for her needs.

What happens to elderly persons who have no adult children or close relatives to manage their changing needs? Often seniors rely on informal support systems, enter long-term care facilities sooner than would be necessary, or simply do not get the attention that's needed.

FLRC now offers a specialized program geared for seniors who do not have adult children or relatives to manage their care. Professional Geriatric Care Management is a relatively new profession and is now common in urban areas or states where there are large numbers of retirees. Professional Care Management will become more popular as baby boomers age and seek alternatives to the high cost of long-term care facilities.

A Professional Geriatric Care Manager (PGCM) is typically a social worker, nurse, or gerontologist who is licensed in their respective field, specializes in meeting the needs of seniors and their families, and is certified as a Care Manager.

A PGCM initially assesses the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social needs of the senior. A service plan is developed that offers solutions for problem areas and clarifies all of the services to be provided. The PGCM sees that the plan is carried out.

For example, a PGCM may arrange and supervise in-home help, make referrals and follow up with community services, intervene in crises, and act as a liaison to families at a distance. He/she may assist with moving an older person to or from a retirement community, or serve as an advocate and support to someone in a long-term care facility.

A PGCM will do what adult children would do, if they were available and had the time and resources.

PGCM's are hired by individuals, family members, trust officers, or anyone who has responsibility for the care of an older person. Some long-term care insurances provide reimbursement for care management. While the service may seem expensive, money is saved when placement is delayed and hospitalizations are avoided. Long-distance caregivers are saved the expense and stress with traveling and time away from work and families of their own.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of professional care management is peace of mind for both the senior and long distance caregiver. It is invaluable to know that someone is available who has the relationship, expertise, and resources to intervene with the changing needs and challenges that seniors face.



Lois Wenger, L.C.S.W.

FLRC's Professional Care Manager is Lois Wenger, L.C.S.W. She is combining her 17 years of personal experience with caregiving, and her 32 years of professional experience as a counselor, to provide this service. She is certified as a care manager and is a member of the National

Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers. (www.caremanager.org).

FLRC also provides traditional counseling for seniors, families, and caregivers that is usually reimbursed by Medicare if there are significant mental health issues. Information and referral, consultation, and short term counseling is also available on a private pay basis. Services are now provided at the FLRC office, VMRC Resource Connection office, and home visits. For further information, call FLRC 434-8450.



Connections Prayer Calendar February 2006

Sunday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

Jerrel and Lorene Suter in memory of their parents, Menno and Margaret Suter and Jason and Maria Weaver. Their lives of faith impacted the generations to come.

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, email Gloria Lehman at gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or call (800) 707-5535.

Monday

5 Today the Hunt Family Fiddlers will perform at Eastern Mennonite School auditorium, with the offering benefiting NewBridges and Norma Teles' Gypsy ministry. May this event bless families with good entertainment.

12 Pray for your pastor and his family today. Ask that they will be refreshed by God's word and His presence and that they might, in turn, pass that blessing on to His people.

13 Today Mennonite mission agencies are on the EMU campus to talk with interested persons about serving in short- and long-term mission assignments. Pray that God will make connections with people and agencies.

20 Pray for Jill Landis and the board for the Congregational Resource Center as they host pastors and church librarians at a reception tomorrow. They also need strength as they manage a used book sale fundraiser for the CRC.

27 The leaders of the Jamaica Mennonite Church are preparing for their annual conference this coming weekend. Pray that they know God's direction as all the details come together.

Tuesday

1 Praise God for the gifts for VMBM and VMC, both larger and smaller, that we received near calendar year's end, and all throughout the year! It's great to have many supporters.

7 Pray for Jim and Ruth Mellinger, pastoral couple at Greensboro, NC who moved from Pennsylvania in October. The goal is that under their leadership other congregations can be started in Eastern NC.

14 Pray for Willard Eberly during this month, who is teaching a discipleship course in the Centro Koinonia congregation (Bar) on Christian Caregiving, laying the foundation for a caring, one-to-one supportive ministry.

21 Pray for the Italian Mennonite congregations in Sicily as they begin to organize for outreach ministries this coming summer. Short-term mission teams have become an important way to promote a missionary vision.

28 Pray for our national leaders, the troops stationed overseas and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan as the horrors of war continue. Pray for God's grace in the midst of suffering.

Wednesday

2 Pray for traveling mercy as Duane Maust and Bob Zehr travel from Gulf States Conference to Va. to make a presentation to VMC's delegates and receive two checks supporting GSC and Pine Lake Camp.

9 Pray for the poor and oppressed. Ask that God will reveal Himself in the midst of their distress and that the Mennonite Church, through MCC, MDS, and congregations, may be a source of sustenance and encouragement.

16 There is interest in getting Friendship Bible Coffees started in Sangre Grande, Trinidad. Several women at the Gospel Lighthouse MC are willing to become teachers. Pray for Margaret Keeler as she gives direction.

23 Conference Minister Owen Burkholder will lead VMC's annual Ministry Retreat this weekend at the Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center. Pray for a time of refreshment for those attending.

Thursday

3 Please pray for VMC's officers, staff and delegates as they gather at Springdale MC tomorrow for the annual Winter Delegate Session to discuss MC USA's Joining "Christian Churches Together" among other things.

10 Tomorrow the Unveiling/Glory seminar is being held at EMU; inspiration for participating in God's purposes in the world will be shared. Pray that many will attend, and that God's call will be clear and followed.

17 Thank God for Abigail Kauffman, 1-year-old daughter of Aaron and Laura, ~~from~~ *Send* participants in partnership with Mission Network, who opens doors of friendship to people they meet around La Mesa, Colombia.

24 Pray for Francesco at Bari, a young adult who has recently made a first time commitment to the Lord. Pray that he will grow as a disciple of Jesus and will become involved in the Centro Koinonia congregation.

Saturday

4 Ask the Lord for traveling mercies for Conference Minister Owen Burkholder and his wife Ruth Ann as they travel to First Mennonite Church of Richmond and Huntingdon Mennonite Church in Newport News, VA.

11 Tomorrow, pastor and Bible teacher Duane Yoder continues his presentation on the book of Revelation - the 5th gospel at the new Eastern Mennonite School auditorium. Pray that God may be glorified through His word.

18 Thank the Lord for "Life Unlimited," a Wednesday evening series that Keith and Tami Nice, church planters in Graham, NC are conducting for their neighbors through March 8. It's a study that looks at life's difficult questions.

25 Pray for James Rhee and his wife, Sharon, in the challenging ministry of a Korean Mennonite congregation in Winchester, Va., begun in January. The fellowship shares facilities with the Stephens City Mennonite Church.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

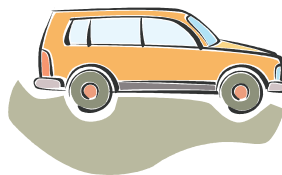
Announcements

World Day of Prayer is March 3, 2006. This year's theme is "Signs of the Times." The material in the World Day of Prayer packet is written by the women of South Africa. To order the packet, call United Distribution Center at (800) 298-5551 ext. 2347. Ask for item #1301. The price is \$2.75+S&H.

Adult Winter Bible School is underway! *"Following the way of the Lamb and overcoming seduction in the midst of persecution"* with Bible teacher Duane Yoder meets at the new Eastern Mennonite School Auditorium 6:30 p.m. Sunday evenings from January 22 - March 5, 2006 (except Feb. 5). Free to the public and childcare is provided.


The **Virginia Mennonite Conference Annual Ministry Retreat** on "Sustaining Faithful Pastoral Leadership" will be February 24-26, 2006 at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, Williamsburg, Va. Owen Burkholder, VMC Minister, will guide the reflections during session times.

Mark your calendars now! The Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly "**Sent! Around the World**" will be **July 6-9, 2006** at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg. Speakers are: **Ramesh Jaimani**, Pastor of Charleville Mennonite Church, Trinidad; **Willard Eberly**, VMBM Mediterranean Regional Director, Bari, Italy; **Nancy Heisey**, President, Mennonite World Conference; **Art McPhee**, Associate Professor of Mission, AMBS.



Do you want to get rid of a used car? Steve Carpenter can sell your vehicle for you and the proceeds will benefit Virginia Mennonite

Conference! Why go through the hassle of selling? You will receive a tax deductible receipt for the full selling price. It's a great way to support the ministries of the Conference. Contact Steve Carpenter at (800) 707-5535 or (540) 434-9727 or email steve.carpenter@vmconf.org.



The 5th Gospel
Revelation
Adult Winter Bible School

Following the way of the Lamb and overcoming seduction in the midst of persecution with Bible teacher Duane Yoder

*at Eastern Mennonite School Auditorium
6:30 p.m. Sunday evenings
from January 22 - March 5, 2006 (except Feb. 5)*

SERVE FOR A YEAR.

- **tranSend** is a mission internship program for those potentially interested in long-term missions
- A year of service allows participants to fully adjust to a new culture or environment and forge deep friendships
- Costs are significantly subsidized
- There are many international opportunities as well as within the United States
- For a complete listing of service locations, visit www.vmbm.org/tranSend or call (800) 707-5535



tranSend
a one-year mission program of VMBM

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