

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

January 2006
Vol. 16, No. 3

Virginia hosts *Menno* folk for the first time

About 20 years ago, Fred Martin, a young Mennonite conference pastor had an idea: music as an outreach to young adults. So, he created a music festival featuring local Mennonite folk and acoustic artists and christened it "Mennofolk." At the time, many of the young people involved questioned their role in the church, but they found great fellowship in this annual event. Now, years later, many are actively engaged in the church. Additionally, their artistry, integrity, and radical lifestyle choices continue to fascinate and delight audiences within and outside of the Mennonite church. Now called "Mennofolk Ontario," this original festival continues and is joined by others in Manitoba, Michiana, and on the Prairie (Kansas). Each Mennofolk festival runs independently, led and organized by a volunteer board, with support from the area conference.

When Wendy Chappell-Dick, who was involved in planning Mennofolk Michiana, moved to Harrisonburg, Va., she decided to get a festival started here. Her enthusiasm and organizational skill aided her in forming a planning committee. She also gained support from Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) where Mennofolk has been "lodged" as an outreach ministry of the Nurture Commission. Mennofolk reflects VMC's commitment to peace, justice and compassion which are central to Christ's teachings.

Mennofolk took place for the first time in Harrisonburg, Nov. 4-6, 2005, with performances on Friday night in eight downtown locations including: The Little Grill, The Court Square Theater, Daily Grind and Luigi's. On Saturday the festival moved to Eastern Mennonite High School (EMHS) where musicians performed throughout the day on three different stages.

More than 20 Mennonite music groups, including nationally known singer/song writer J. D. Martin, shared their music with about 600 people. In addition to music, many visual artists displayed their work in the halls of EMHS. Other performers included: Jan Garrett, Reunion Vocal Band, Daphna Creek, Sons of the Day, Ted and Lee, Finely Tuned, Goldmine Pickers and many more. Although the focus was on folk and



acoustic music, the 1970's rock and roll band Daybreak gathered for a well received reunion concert.

Mennofolk will take place in Harrisonburg again next fall, with help from Trent Wagler, who performed this year with his band The Steel Wheels, and Kirk Shenk-Zehr, among others.

• Steve Carpenter
Virginia Mennonite Conference Coordinator

(above) **Shekinah**, an all-women a cappella group, sings at MennoFolk. They are one of more than 20 music groups that performed November 4-6.

(below) Wendy Chappell-Dick, organizer of the MennoFolk festival in Harrisonburg, sings with Jan Garrett.



Change agents

We're embarking on a new year, a time when we traditionally anticipate change. New Year's Resolutions, we call them. The odds of significant change in a new year are about the same as our success in making changes in the old one. "Same" tends to describe us—which gives me hope. We've been seeing some pretty exciting changes.



Loren Horst
President of VMBM

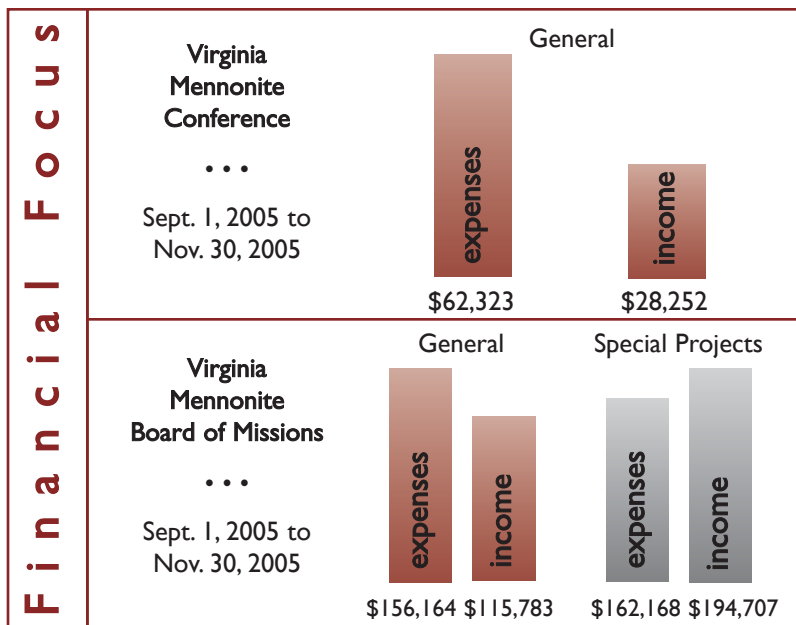
Each of these involve people. God implements change in His world using the people who willingly become His change agents. Two such agents are Willard and Eva Eberly. We don't see that much of them here in the United States since they've spent most of the last 36 years in Italy. They've been involved in planting or giving significant support to the development of 15 congregations. They've lent vision and support to God's mission beyond Italy into the Balkans. Along the way they've translated books, mentored other workers, and served thousands of espressos.

God is calling each of us. One glance at our world tells us the job is not complete. Oh, how incomplete it is! One look at our churches reveals ongoing urgencies. Honesty with our own lives would tell us that God is not finished with us yet—thankfully! Along the way, 2006 will witness the change that God brings, both to us and through us.

- About 8 new congregations are in various stages of vision and implementation.
- Northern District is considering what it means to be a missional district.
- In the last year or so, nearly 250 persons went out in short- and long-term mission with VMBM.
- Mt. View Mennonite Church in Hickory, NC, has gotten excited about mission through a PIM team to Costa Rica and sending a teacher to Ukraine. Incidentally, they are growing at the same time they are sending.
- A couple days ago a young man shared with me God's miraculous intervention in drawing him out of an ungodly lifestyle.
- The Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago added another congregation by adoption.

Virginia Mennonites continue their huge response of compassion to those devastated by hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

Loren Horst



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Editor

Gloria Lehman

Assistant Editor

Jon Trotter

Circulation manager

Beth Brunk

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Phone 540-434-9727

1-800-707-5535

E-mail info@vmbm.org

info@vmconf.org

Web www.vmbm.org

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Stories of Peace

sponsored by the Peace Coordinators
of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

A conscientious objector

“I am a conscientious objector.” Nathan Jesse-Blue Forrest often begins and ends his talks to church and youth groups with these words. His bumper sticker says the same. These words define most of his life. His story sounds much like stories of COs during World War I. However, Nathan was a youth during the Vietnam War.

Nathan didn't grow up in a Christian home, but had a unique spiritual experience as a young boy, read the Bible, and developed a belief that any form of killing is wrong. He was drafted at 18, but had never heard the words “pacifist” or “conscientious objector.” Upon induction into the army, he refused to wear the uniform and said he could not participate in military activities. He was ridiculed, sent for psychiatric evaluations, and spent two and a half years in a military prison. After being beaten by other prisoners, he was sent to a rehabilitation center. There he was afforded more freedom, including sitting outside with no guards. One day, he walked away and never went back. He spent the next two and a half years hiding from the FBI, being supported by a Vietnam-era underground railroad.

Eventually, he decided that the only way he could be free was to leave his country and go into exile. He was smuggled into Canada, where he spent the next 26 years in exile. There, he began the AmEx, a society of American Expatriates/Americans in Exile for the Cause of Freedom of Conscience, who had left the US for Canada. He states that of the 109,000 expatriates, 70% were Christians with pacifist beliefs, many who had no idea that a CO position existed, or were not afforded that luxury because they were not from an historic peace church. In the '70s and then in the early '90s, all these expatriates were pardoned and allowed to freely come back to the US. Nathan ended his exile on September 9, 1998. Last summer, Nathan was finally granted CO status by the government and his discharge was lifted to a General Discharge, and freedom from a criminal record.

Nathan is now running his own business as a landscaper and carpenter, and is a peacemaker in Waynesboro, Va. He feels at home with Anabaptism, but wonders why current Mennonites are so quiet about the gospel of peace. He believes that a draft will happen again, and is specifically concerned about today's youth.

• Nathan Forrest attends Springdale Mennonite Church



A march for Jesus in Italy

This was not the usual political protest or traditional festival to honor some saintly statue, so commonly seen in Italian cities. No, a different “wind” was blowing through the ancient city of Trani. Festive white banners unfurled in the fresh sea breeze. White caps displaying the “fish” symbol shone brightly under the autumn sun. But most striking of all was the contagious enthusiasm of the approximately 600 believers gathering together. They'd come from all over Puglia (the “heel” of the boot) to “march for Jesus.” Their joyful manifestation of praise resounded through the cobblestone streets. Seventeen of us from Centro Koinonia (Bari) joined them in declaring the lordship of Jesus and in worshipping Him publicly with music and personal testimony. The theme and purpose uniting us was “Making Jesus famous in Puglia.” What a unique privilege and opportunity to lift up Jesus in a region where today there is only a small believers' church movement. May many more be drawn to Him!

• Eva Eberly
Mediterranean Regional Assistant

Our 2005
Penny Power total:
\$22,834.09

Matching funds were
\$5,821.60

**Thanks to everyone
who contributed!**

UNVEILING 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.**

Saturday, February 11, 2006
9:30 am - 4:00 pm
EMU Suter Science Center S106

Registration is \$10
Please register by February 3
to Gloria Lehman at VMBM



church yet. Some live a long distance from the Jesus Deaf Church (the name they chose for this group). Mario, one of the older students, has a passion for inviting any deaf people he knows and Nancy asks us to pray that she will have discernment about how to carry this out.

Nancy also relates to the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church in Orange Walk Town which has welcomed her as family. The BEMC has extended a hand of fellowship to the Jesus Deaf Church and includes them in special worship events. However, the BEMC worships in Spanish and there is no interpreter available at this time. Please pray for ways to work together and bridge the language gap.

Nancy's call to serve the deaf of Belize is bearing fruit for God's Kingdom! We give glory to God for his awesome work and are thankful to partner with her in this ministry.

• Gloria L. Lehman
Caribbean Regional Assistant

Nancy Marshall helps deaf students to better understand the Bible

In August 2005, Nancy Marshall, deaf educator from the First Deaf Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., went to Orange Walk Town, Belize, to serve the deaf community. She is a VMBM *tranSend* participant, serving this year with the option of serving additional years.

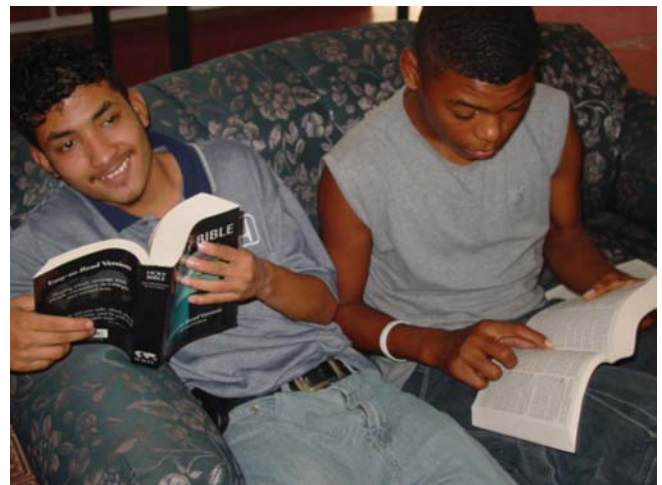
In a community school, Nancy teaches a group of 11 deaf students ranging in age from 6 through 18. Some of the youngest children are just beginning to learn sign language while the older students use sign language fluently. The children and parents are excited about the progress the children are making particularly in reading and math. Nancy shares teaching the class with a Belizean second year teacher. One of Nancy's responsibilities is to train the Belizean teacher in methodologies for teaching deaf children as well as help her to improve her sign language skills.

On Sundays, Nancy gathers deaf children and youth from miles around, driving two hours to pick up eager Sunday school participants. From a small beginning until now, the group has grown to 14 participants. Acting out Biblical passages like I Corinthians 12 and the parables, the students interact with each other and with the Scripture. Helping them to understand what the Bible means is important. The usual Bible translations are difficult for deaf people to read. Nancy requested "easy-to-read version" Bibles, which were ordered and sent, and paid for by a Virginia family as their Christmas project. The Bibles were received with great enthusiasm and gratitude!

The Sunday school students are eager to invite other deaf people that don't attend



(above left) Four youth sign "thank you" for their new Bibles.
(above) Nancy Marshall (r) and the Jesus Deaf Church, her Sunday school class of deaf students.
(below) Two members of the Sunday school class study the Bible.





Loren Horst, VMBM president, presents a certificate to the Beilers for their faithful service in Jamaica.

Celebration of Beilers' medical ministry

On Sunday, November 20, ninety-five people gathered at the Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., to celebrate the medical ministry of Omar and Dolores in Jamaica. In 1999, Omar and Dolores went to rural St. Elizabeth to provide health care for a rugged area of this island nation. The clinic in the Joyland Mennonite Church had been closed for 3 years, so the Beilers were welcomed warmly.

During the six years of service, Omar and Dolores treated children for the usual childhood diseases and other illnesses that are more invasive. Physical examinations for school were essential in July and August. Adults needing medication for diabetes and hypertension sought help from "Doc." Occasionally a car or bicycle accident brought a trauma patient to them. Each one was treated with medical expertise and with Christ's compassion for the whole person.

The Jamaica Mennonite Church held thanksgiving services for Omar and Dolores before they left Jamaica in May 2005. The Beilers are acutely missed for their medical service and also for their love and interaction with church leaders and members.

At the celebration event, Lonnie, Shannon and Nicole Yoder shared about their friendship with the Beilers while they were in Jamaica in 2001-02. Philip Rhodes and Jesse Bergey talked about the relationship that they shared with them, finding a "home away from home" at the Beilers' house. VMBM President, Loren Horst, presented a certificate of service to Omar and Dolores.

Beilers' Missionary Support Team welcomed participants at this event and provided refreshments, including Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee! Pastor Mark Schloneger led in a closing prayer of blessing. We give God thanks for Omar and Dolores' faithful service in this part of God's Kingdom.

Allen Umble honored for ministry in Albania

The country of Albania is obscure to many Americans but on Saturday evening, November 19, it was well-known to about 80 people. A crowd of that size gathered at the Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., to celebrate God's goodness in Albania.

Norma Teles and Allen Umble were guests of honor at this Albania Festival. Norma, a Brazilian missionary serving in Albania since 1999, warmed the room with her smile and warm greetings. Persons who had served in Albania in the past years attended as did many local Albanians. They connected with each other, sharing memories and stories of their experiences there.

Willard Eberly, VMBM Mediterranean Regional Director, showed a video of the outreach in Albania. God is doing a mighty work through the believers there. Norma ministers to youth and children in various settings, including summer camp for junior youth, and kindergarten-type sessions for Gypsy children. Sometimes Norma has an opportunity to relate to the Gypsy children's mothers too.

Allen Umble served in Lezhe, Albania, as a teacher of English for six years. Holding classes there opened doors for telling people about Christ. Allen also assisted with Bible studies and worship in the growing congregation. During the Festival, President Loren Horst presented Allen with a certificate for his faithful service for Christ in Albania. At this point, there is no teacher of English ready to take Allen's place. Could God be calling you to this service role?

Typical Albanian foods were served and music was played, including some praise songs. Prayer for our brothers and sisters in Albania, and a call for workers for this place in God's Kingdom closed the festival. We thank God for involving us in this ministry in Albania.



Loren Horst presents a certificate to Allen for his service in Albania from 1996-2005.

EMU nurses embrace ‘sacred covenant’ with patients

by Eileen Freuh

Ten years ago, Eastern Mennonite University's nursing department began exploring what sets them apart from other nursing programs. The result? The adoption of a “sacred covenant” model of nursing that is based on both faith beliefs and high professional standards and that focuses on bringing people to wholeness and healing:

“We view an individual’s story as holy ground and, as nurses, we intersect with them in sacred space.”

“We had adopted approaches to nursing that emphasize service, empathy, agape love and empowerment,” explained Ann G. Hershberger, professor of nursing. “As we explored these approaches, we embraced the concept of a sacred covenant model which encompasses these approaches. It puts into words what we already thought about how we approach patients and how we, as faculty, approach our students.”

The sacred covenant model focuses on the nurse-patient relationship and the binding agreement between both parties. Patients gain healing, but nurses gain as well. They receive the honor of practicing their profession and a deep satisfaction and meaning in life.

“Because of our faith tradition, we view an individual’s story as holy ground and, as nurses, we intersect with them in sacred space,” Hershberger noted. “As nurses we are privileged to be allowed into the most intimate points of people’s lives when they are at their most vulnerable. We view the nurse-patient relationship as sacred because of the intimacy and spirituality of that connection.”

The sacred covenant approach to patients is different from a consumer model that emphasizes the business aspects of health care and views the patient as a customer without taking into account the patient’s gifts to the healer.

To better understand this spiritual relationship between nurse and patient, EMU nursing students are asked to read a paper in their first semester that Hershberger wrote on the sacred covenant model and revisit the concept each semester in various classes.

Faculty members are seeing more awareness of the term in students’ papers as they reflect on incidents in their nursing practice. As one EMU nursing student wrote:

“[My patient] was a Honduran immigrant woman—unemployed, undocumented, unmarried, spoke no English and without family in the U.S.



(above) Holly Smith, a senior nursing student, applies oxygen via face mask to SimMan, one of two computerized Laerdal mannequins that provide “real life patient care scenarios” for students while EMU nursing professor Violet M. Horst observes the procedure in the new critical care area of the nursing laboratory. Photo by Jim Bishop

She has a very traumatic immigration experience involving sexual violence, resulting in the conception and birth of a perfect, beautiful daughter. Initially, I could only rely on my presence to be the starting point in our partnership. I hoped something tangible could rise out of the energy and humility I invested in this woman and her child. I became someone she could trust, someone who helped her navigate the system, an advocate for her human rights. She did not hesitate to show me the sadness of her journey, the loss, the vulnerability. She also unknowingly taught me a great deal about strength, endurance and the power of her mothering love. I found myself standing on the holy ground of a sacred covenant.”

This, then, is what sets EMU’s nurses apart from others: a view of nursing as a vocation and a means to live out their daily call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

- Eileen Freuh is a free-lance writer/editor living in Harrisonburg, Va.



Connections Prayer Calendar January 2006

Sunday

1 Today we celebrate God's gift of a new year. Pray that Christians will seek Christ's way of peace and care for others the way Jesus did, regardless of social status, religion, gender or creed.

8 A New Year activity of the Italian believers is giving attractive page-a-day Scripture calendars to friends & neighbors, many of whom have never read the Bible before. Pray the Holy Spirit would breathe life in those who read them.

15 Tomorrow begins Eastern Mennonite Seminary's weeklong School for Leadership Training. Pray for Raleigh (NC) Mennonite Church's pastor, Duane Beck, a resource person for this event.

22 Pray for the Gospel Lighthouse Church in Sangre Grande, Trinidad, now under the guidance of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago. Richard and Margaret Keeler go each weekend to nurture this group.

29 Centro Koinimia, Bari, Italy, exuberantly worships together through music, teaching and sharing. Pray for Phil and Marcia Lehman's involvement and for the entire congregation as they grow in God's grace.

Monday

2 Willard and Eva Eberly travel back to Bari, Italy tomorrow. As they renew their commitment to serve the churches in the Mediterranean, ask God to renew their spiritual vision and passion, as well as their physical vitality.

9 Pray for Amy Rush and Barbara Gautcher as they are new to the VMC Finance and Historical committees, respectfully. Ask for wisdom as they carry out their new responsibilities.

16 What will happen today at the Maramatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica? Monica Unzicker is always alert for opportunities to learn along with the students. May Jesus walk with her every step of the way.

23 Is your congregation considering a missions service experience this summer? Open the borders of daily life by participating in a *Partners in Missions* team. See www.vmbm.org for a list of opportunities.

30 Aaron and Laura Kauffman, *TeamSend* participants in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network, ask us to pray for a good start to the new school year. Thank God for their continued good health.

Tuesday

3 Pray for revitalization of mission vision and the mobilization of Virginia Conference congregations for reaching unreached areas of the world, in response to Christ's sacrificial love and His "great commission."

10 This is a crucial time for some families and individuals who are presently considering missionary service. Please intercede for them that nothing will hinder them from understanding God's call and will for their lives.

17 Pray for the Lithuania Christian College where Steve and Betsy Dintaman are serving. May the faculty, staff and students have a productive semester, with God's clear direction.

24 Pray for the newly elected Secretary of VMC, Lois Shank, as she adjusts to her new responsibilities as an officer of Conference. Pray as well for everyone who serves on commissions and committees for the church.

31 Pray that the seminar *Unveiling Glory* planned for Feb. 11 at EMU will draw many interested persons to learn about new and dynamic ways of fulfilling God's purposes in the world. Can you attend?

Wednesday

4 Pray for Pastor Earl Monroe, who chairs the Southern District, as they meet tomorrow night for fellowship, encouragement and to conduct business. This district is one of 11 regional Districts in Virginia Mennonite Conference.

11 The deaf children that Nancy Marshall, *TeamSend* participant, teaches in Orange Walk Town, Belize, thrive on her innovative teaching techniques. Pray for her continued health, energy, and wisdom for this important task.

18 Pray for Donna VanHorn and the members of the VMC Gift Discernment Committee as they prayerfully consider replacing Treasurer Ron Piper and others whose terms of service are expiring.

25 Continue to pray for the earthquake devastated area in Pakistan and northern India. In addition to receiving needed shelters, may the people there learn to know the love of Christ which can transform their lives.

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

Bettie Wilson in loving memory of her husband, Hal, whose birthday was January 17.

Let's follow Hal and Bettie's example to pray, pray, pray!
If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, contact gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or (800) 707-5535.

Thursday

5 VMC Treasurer, Ron Piper, will lead the Finance Committee in their quarterly meeting tomorrow morning. Ask God to grow wisdom and grace to Ron and the others, as they seek to effectively steward the gifts entrusted to them.

12 Pray for Conference Moderator Beryl Jantzi, and Assistant Moderator Steve Brown, as they lead Conference Council in its quarterly deliberations and prepare for the Winter Delegate meeting on Feb. 4.

19 Melissa Wenger, *TeamSend* participant, is preparing for the responsibilities that she has with the Poarch Community Church. May Christ infuse her mind with creativity so that the children and youth will be nurtured in faith.

26 Robert and Lois Wenger are concluding their home leave in Va. Pray for God's special touch of healing for Robert, and for renewed strength to return to the Maranatha School for the next six months.

Friday

6 This week Christopher Dock HS (Pa.) students are studying the Trinidadian culture, relating to Mennonite youth, and doing service projects. Pray for David and Carole Stevens, group leaders, as they guide this cross-cultural experience.

13 Careful planning and great insight is needed by Skip and Carol Tobin in Southeast Asia for the forward movement of their ministry. Ask God to double His portion of guidance for them today.

20 Thank God for a dedicated couple in Esperanza, Trinidad, who faithfully visit homes in this village each week to listen, encourage, counsel and pray, whether or not others join them.

27 Thank the Lord today for individuals and churches who faithfully pray and give time, money, and effort for the ongoing work of communicating the "Good News." May there be many rich rewards for these unsung ambassadors for Jesus.

Saturday

7 Remember Mike and Kara Martin, from New Beginnings Church, serving as missionary interns this year in Lushnje, Albania. Your prayers are vital to their effective learning and acculturation.

14 Ken Nafziger and Jim Clemens will lead the Harrisonburg area churches in an exploration of the hymnal supplement *Sing the Journey* tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at EMHS. Pray that the Lord will be glorified in this singing event.


21 Pray for Lindale Mennonite Church's pastor, Duane Yoder, as he begins a six-week Adult Winter Bible School on Sunday nights at Eastern Mennonite School's auditorium. He will be teaching from the book of Revelation.


28 Yesterday and today, the youth leaders in the Jamaica Mennonite Church are holding a seminar to enhance their nurture of young people. Pray that God will direct their planning as they dream about this generation's wellbeing.

**"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."
Matthew 3:11 (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.

 **Hunt Family Fiddlers**, from Chesapeake, Va., will perform on Sunday, February 5 at 4 p.m. in the Eastern Mennonite School Auditorium. An offering will benefit NewBridges and Norma Teles' Gypsy ministry.



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)*

Service Transitions

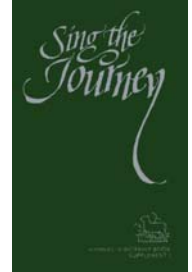
Ellie Hampton, of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, and **Justine Steiner**, of Daypring Christian Fellowship, formerly a Virginia Conference church, are serving on a RAD (Reaching and Discipling) team in Santa Rosa, Argentina. They, with two other young adults, are doing evangelism, working with cleanup at a church, and working in orphanages.



Alex and Juliane Steiner Kozel, members of Washington Community Fellowship, are serving for a year as volunteers at the Stansberry Children's Home in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Sing the Journey, an evening of singing and introducing the new Hymnal Supplement, led by Ken Nafziger, Professor of Music at Eastern Mennonite University, and composer Jim Clemens, will happen Sunday, January 15, 2006, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Eastern Mennonite School Auditorium. Child care will be provided for ages 0-7. This event is sponsored by Virginia Mennonite Conference, Eastern Mennonite School, and the Mission Endowment Fund. It is free and open to the public.

Photo: www.mph.org



Ed Bontrager has been named **USA Ministries Director** for Virginia

Mennonite Board of Missions effective November 1, 2005. Ed replaces Joe Bontrager who resigned in July 2005. Ed will continue to carry responsibilities in development and church relations for VMBM.

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

 Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions



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